

HONORING ZURANA HORTON “A SHE/RO FROM AROUND THE WAY,” BY  
DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY BASED STRATEGIC PLAN FOR A NONPROFIT  
INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE THAT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY  
STREET VIOLENCE.

By

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A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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## ABSTRACT

HONORING ZURANA HORTON, “A SHE/RO FROM AROUND THE WAY” BY DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY BASED STRATEGIC PLAN FOR A NONPROFIT INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE THAT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY STREET VIOLENCE.

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Elizabeth Butler

Nearly half of the children in Brownsville, Brooklyn live below the national poverty level. Social Isolation, poverty and high crime in the community have affected these children in significant ways. Too many of them have lost their lives to senseless acts of street violence. A mother of 12 children, Zurana Horton, is among the slain.

Our research revealed that Brownsville has no program designed to support children that have been traumatized by violence in the street. This Doctor of Ministry Project was designed to address that need by working with the community to develop a strategic plan for the creation of a nonprofit initiative.

Focusing on the residents in one of the public housing developments, we laid the foundation for our work as we gathered relevant data from community engagement questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. Over 600 residents participated in the study. The results demonstrated that public safety and the welfare of children are primary concerns among the residents in the community.

We also hosted several events to raise awareness, gather support, and inform people about our work. Our work with the families in the community demonstrated a compelling need and community receptivity for this initiative to be established.

To the family of a shero, the late Zurana Horton, and the people of Brownsville.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To the spirit of my late beloved mother who taught me about faith;

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## Definition of Terms

***Affected by street violence*** - Someone who is injured or harmed physically, emotionally, or psychologically from shootings, in the street. It also includes those who suffered trauma from witnessing an act of street violence.

***Children*** – A young person between infancy and youth. Within the context of this paper, the age category of a child is anyone 12 years of age and under.

***Concentrated Poverty*** – Many low-income families and/or people that are living in close proximity to each other, i.e., public housing development. Most of these families may be living on or below the federal poverty line.

***Elders*** – The older persons in a family, community or generation who based upon life experiences would garner respect, honor and esteem.

***Howard Houses Development***- The Brownsville Community in Brooklyn, New York has 18 public housing clusters. One cluster of houses is named Howard Houses. This housing cluster consists of 10 buildings. The buildings range from 7 to 13 stories high.

***Poverty*** – This term describes a socioeconomic condition when an individual or family is living with a scarcity of financial resources to meet basic needs. In the United States, the federal poverty level is \$23,550 for a family consisting of four people.<sup>1</sup>

***Shero*** – A female who has had an indelible impact on others due to a notable act(s) of courage.

***Street Violence*** –It pertains to acts of aggression by force from shootings occurring on

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<sup>1</sup> National Center For Children's Poverty, <http://www.nccp.org/topics/childpoverty.html> (accessed February 8, 2015).

the community streets, grounds or courtyard.

***The Streets*** – This phrase is a colloquial expression. It refers to a subculture rather than a physical place. It lends itself to social activities in a cultural domain and/or associations and informal networks of an unsavory nature.

***Trauma*** – The condition of living with the results of prolonged physical or emotional shock or bodily injury.<sup>2</sup>

***Youth*** – A young person between the ages of 13 – 17.

***Violence*** - The strength of force that causes harm or damages a person. The use of the term in this study is primarily limited to the force inflicted by gun violence.

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<sup>2</sup>Merriam Webster Online Dictionary Britannica, s.v. “Webster, Noan” [http:// www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com) (accessed February 1, 2015).

## INTRODUCTION

In Brooklyn, New York, the Brownsville Community has garnered the reputation of being one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the nation. A mention of walking or driving through this community may invoke an unsettling reaction from many people. It is the opinion of many, that the crime rate in this neighborhood tops all other New York communities.<sup>3</sup> The 73<sup>rd</sup> Precinct, which takes in Brownsville as part of its jurisdiction, has logged more shooting victims than any other precinct in New York City.<sup>4</sup>

The impact of a high rate of senseless killings throughout the years, primarily as a result of Black on Black crime, has left an indelible effect on the lives of children and families in this Brooklyn community. The idea that Brownsville is an unsafe, economically depressed place to live, without much prospect of change for the future is also shared by some of the community's residents. During the course of work for this demonstration project, I encountered many residents of all ages who shared vivid accounts of shootings and killings in the streets of the community. Residents live in fear. A significant number of the 558 people who participated in the community engagement

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<sup>3</sup> Fei Fei Sun, "Brownsville: Inside One of Brooklyn's Most Dangerous Neighborhoods" [www.lightbox.time.com](http://www.lightbox.time.com) 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012, [www.lightbox.time.com/2012/01/31/brownsville-brooklyn/#1](http://www.lightbox.time.com/2012/01/31/brownsville-brooklyn/#1).

<sup>4</sup> Natalie Musumeci & Rocco Parascandola, "Gun violence in Brownsville where cops see more shooting victims than any other precinct," <http://www.nydailynews.com>, 21 May, 2014, [www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/b-kin-neighborhood-troubled-gun-violence-article-1.1799868](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/b-kin-neighborhood-troubled-gun-violence-article-1.1799868).

questionnaires indicated that there is nothing good about living in Brownsville. In Chapter 6 of this paper, the author will elaborate more on these findings.

Brownsville is a community where over 86,000 people call home.<sup>5</sup> Geographically, it is located in eastern Brooklyn of New York City. The total land area is 1.163 square miles (3.01 km<sup>2</sup>) and the ZIP codes for the neighborhood are 11212 and 11233.<sup>6</sup> It is bordered by Atlantic Avenue to the north (on the Bedford-Stuyvesant border), East 98th Street/Ralph Avenue to the west (Flatbush) and Crown Heights borders) and the freight rail Bay Ridge Branch of the Long Island Rail Road and Linden Boulevard to the south (adjacent to the neighborhood of Canarsie) and Van Sinderen Avenue to the east (East New York).<sup>7</sup>

One aspect of Brownsville that is often not cited in articles and various writings is that the majority of its' residents do not reside in public housing. An estimated number of 65,000 residents live in one, two, and four family homes. Brownsville received a facelift when the city of New York and churches in Brownsville collaborated on the Nehemiah Housing Plan in 1987.<sup>8</sup> This plan brought over 1,000 affordable private homes to Brownsville. It injected some life serum in this stagnant neighborhood.

SINCE Oct. 31, 1982, when ground was broken in Brownsville for the first Nehemiah home - a three-bedroom, brick town house that sold for \$39,000 - national attention has focused on the cooperative effort that brought together local churches, community organizers and the City of New York to build affordable housing without Federal assistance in an

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<sup>5</sup> Edna Ishayik, "A Sanctuary, 100 Years and Counting," nytimes.com 18<sup>th</sup> April 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1iy5prS>.

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, "Brownsville, Brooklyn" last modified 2008, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brownsville>, Brooklyn.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony DePalma, "The Nehemiah Plan: A Success, but..." nytimes.com, 27 September 1987, [www.nytimes.com/1987/09/27/realestate/the/the-nehemiah-plan-a-success-but.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/27/realestate/the/the-nehemiah-plan-a-success-but.html).



area so devastated it seemed doubtful that even one house could be sold... Nehemiah began amid widespread skepticism and doubt. But the church coalition proved it could do what it promised. The first 1,050 houses have been sold, and a waiting list that has been closed for months now contains 5,300 names. It was Rev Johnny Ray Youngblood who named the plan Nehemiah, after the biblical prophet that was sent to rebuild Jerusalem. Rev. Youngblood concedes that in their own way, the people behind Nehemiah have become prophets who are not heard in their own land since the local initiative has not been replicated in any borough outside Brooklyn.<sup>9</sup>

The manicured lawns, white fences, and driveways of the new homes helped to boost the spirit of the neighborhood. However, they were not enough to lift the cloud of the community's formidable past and problematic geography. This neighborhood is distinguished perhaps above all else, by its high concentration of public housing—the highest anywhere in the nation.<sup>10</sup> There are many spots where you can stand and see nothing but the high-rise towers of the (NYCHA) New York City Housing Authority in every direction, which perhaps more than anything else adds to the area's sense of enclosure.<sup>11</sup> One writer describes a large section of Brownsville as “a maze of NYCHA buildings”, providing shelter for approximately 21,000 citizens of Brooklyn.<sup>12</sup>

Many believe that the geography of this neighborhood has been the primary deterrent to its' social development and economic growth. Large concentrations of public housing developments engender social isolation among residents.<sup>13</sup> Later in the chapter 3,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Edna Ishaik, “A Brownsville Sanctuary, 100 Years and Counting”, *nytimes.com*, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1iy5prS>.

<sup>11</sup> Bellafante, “Resurrecting Brownsville”, *thenation.com*, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013, <http://www.thenation.com>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Edward S. Shihadeh and Nicole Flynn, “Segregation and Crime: The Effect of Black Social Isolation on the Rates of Urban Violence,” *Social Forces*, Vol. 74, No 4 (Jun., 1996): 1329, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/71.125.205.28> . (accessed November 17, 2014).

this writer will examine some of the social problems that are inherently generic to living in conditions of concentrated poverty, and prolonged social isolation.

Some researchers cited violence as another problem. Street violence is a big issue in the Brownsville Community, especially in the immediate vicinity of the public housing developments. Thirty-five percent of participants that responded to our community engagement questionnaires identified gun violence as the number one issue of concern to them.

On October 21, 2011, gunfire in the streets near the Howard Housing Development in Brownsville claimed the life of Zurana Horton, a 34 years old mother of 12 children. She was fatally shot when she threw herself into the line of a hail of bullets.<sup>14</sup> She was trying to protect schoolchildren near Public School 298 in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn.<sup>15</sup> The incident happened as Mrs. Horton was attending to the welfare and safety of her biological child. She was simply waiting for the arrival of the school bus. The bus arrived that day. Her child got off. However, she was not there to perform the duty of a mother. She had answered a higher call as she “hovered over some children like a bird”<sup>16</sup> and paid the greatest honor to humanity. She sacrificed her life to save children.

I did not have the pleasure of meeting Zurana prior to her death. However, her tragic passing left a deep impression upon me. Her decision to protect children in the face

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<sup>14</sup> Burke, Kerry and Kappstatter, Bob and Morales and Mark, Parascandola, Rocco “Pregnant Mom dies shielding school children from rooftop gunman in Brooklyn”, *New York Daily News*, October 21, 2011, <http://www.nydailynews.com> (accessed 1/20/14).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Lisa Miller, “34 Because Zurana Horton Took a Bullet to Save Her Daughter’s Life” *New York Magazine*, December 11, 2011, <http://nymag.com/nymag/rss/all/zurana-horton/> (accessed 1/20/14).

of imminent danger was an act of self-sacrifice. Her story pulled me into a personal introspection about my life's work and journey. Unintentionally, she challenged me to move further out of the comforts of the church, and journey deeper into the margins of society to do something for the children in the community that Zurana left behind. I believe that this is acceptable work in ministry as Jesus, an Advocate for the poor, sanctioned it when he stood up in the synagogue and proclaimed it. "The Spirit of The Lord is upon me. Because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."<sup>17</sup>

Robert Linthicum captures the sentiment well in his book on *Transforming Power- Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community*. In this book, Linthicum outlines some practical strategies for the church's engagement with the community. Theologically, Linthicum believes "a culture that places its primary value on relationship with God must also be a culture that places primary value on people and their well being."<sup>18</sup> Along these lines, he went on to say that the church should be an advocate for society's powerless. "It is the job of God's people to stand in the breach and defend the cause of the poor, powerless and marginalized before the principalities and powers of the city and state."<sup>19</sup>

This Doctor of Ministry Project was developed to create a strategic plan for an initiative to help young people between ages 6-17 that reside in the Howard Houses in the

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<sup>17</sup> (Luke 4:18-19 NRSV).

<sup>18</sup> Robert Linthicum, *Transforming Power, Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community* (Dowers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 77.

Brownsville community in Brooklyn, New York, and have been affected by street violence. It honors the valor of a mother, Zurana Horton.

### **How The Study Is Organized**

The work was (and continues to be) a deeply reflective process. Pauses were often taken out of the necessity to reflect. Unexpected turns were compelled and sometimes moves were made in directions that were not originally planned. One such shift occurred when an overwhelming amount of focus group participants and others interviewed, shared personal perspectives on the gun and street violence in their community. The majority of the participants were of the opinion that little exists in the community to support families after their loved one was killed. At this juncture, the writer found it fundamentally expedient to give voice and value to the narratives of the participants. In consideration, a fourth research question was added. This question gave the writer lead way to investigate the impact of untreated trauma on people's lives.

Chapter 1 begins with a short biographical narrative of Zurana Horton. As stated earlier in the introduction, she inspired this project in ministry. Being that Zurana lived in public housing: Tilden Houses in Brownsville, it was critical to this body of work to explore the history of Brownsville in a historical and sociological context. In this chapter, the writer cites personal connections to this community through her family, spiritual and social justice biography. The expected outcomes for this demonstration project are also outlined. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and the modifications that were made due to the limitations.

Chapter 2 is an analysis of the challenge of conducting the project. The writer provides examples to support her position that children are worth the fight, even if it

leads to death. As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said: “if a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn’t not fit to live.”<sup>20</sup> The passion with which Malala Yousafzai fought for girls’ education is the equivalent to which we all should fight for something that we believe in. It is a challenge to affirm and support young people in a culture that places children last.

Chapter 3 is a discussion and investigation of the research as it relates to the research questions. It does more than identify or list the body of research. It provides a contrast, analysis and synthesis of the Literature and studies relating to the topic.

Chapter 4 entitled, *Responding To The Conditions On The Ground*, is the Biblical and Theological Vision Statement which undergirds this work and places it within an ideological context. An exegesis of Luke 7:7-17 is conducted. It is the writer’s belief that this scriptural text provides powerful insight and support about Jesus’ love for children and people in disenfranchised communities such as Brownsville.

Chapter 5 is a detailed description of how the research design was constructed. The challenge statement and research questions are highlighted. It outlines the consideration given to the ethical guidelines relating to the writer’s school’s policy on the human subjects. Within this chapter, the instrumentation is identified; the data collection process is described.

In Chapter 6, the researcher analyzes, interprets and reveals the outcome of the project’s research design. It is actually a close-up look at the contribution and function of the data in answering the research questions. The writer/researcher has crafted a narrative from the data. The narrative concludes by reflecting on ways in which the research

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<sup>20</sup> History Learning Site, Civil Rights Quotes, Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Speech, in Detroit, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1963, [www.historylearningsite.co.uk/civil%20rights20quotes.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/civil%20rights20quotes.htm) (accessed 11/17/14).

process could have been improved upon.

The last chapter is the writer's reflections of personal growth in light of the ministerial competencies.

## CHAPTER 1

### INSPIRATION FOR THE PROJECT

#### **Honoring the sacrifice of a “Shero” from around the way**

At 5:45 a.m. my antiquated radio disrupted me from a deep lethargy of a peaceful sleep. I slowly cracked open one resistant eyelid. Even in the dark shades of the dawn, I could see the world that I had eased away from as I drifted off to sleep hours ago. It was all too familiar. Now I was back to the world of the conscious mind- thinking, moving and doing.

My limbs tried to bestir themselves. They were getting great resistance from the muscles and the mind. Rebellion was taking place in my body. Gradually, I felt a couple of limbs moving: the feet. Why must they always be the ringleaders? Of course, the hands must follow. Every time things move this slowly, it is a sign that my entire day may be in slow motion; I may never be able to shift into the next gear. Perhaps cancelling all of my engagements today may be the better choice. I felt like a mutiny was taking place in my body.

Then the conscious mind began to do what it did best at that time of the morning – THINK! Thank God this was not a workday. Yet, I had such a compelling list of things to do. Then the conscious mind issued a resolve: short of my death or someone close to me, I could not idle this day away.

The other eyelid slowly cracked open to take a peek at the world I must now rejoin. Now, I could see clearer. Through the cracks in the wooden strips of the venetian blinds, I could see rays of daylight. It was negotiating with the darkness to step back and let her have a turn. The darkness surrendered and moved back gradually but gracefully. I wish humans would work in harmony like that.

The morning sounds of the city were so peaceful, quite and reassuring. They whispered, “Get up now.”

I responded, “ In a little while, this is the weekend.”

I laid there thinking that every second that passed by, had to be accounted for. I could no longer allow time to languish deliberating the obvious.

The embrace of my warm bedding was so seductive. After a while, I slowly disturbed my cocoon by bending my knees as I rolled over on one side. With the motion of one hand, I threw the covers off my body as I flung both feet to the floor. Standing erect and barefooted, I shuffled a couple of feet to the bedroom door, opened it slowly, flipped the light switch and began to negotiate my descent to the lower level. Step by step, I moved down the stairs until I reached the landing.

I took hold of the brass doorknob and pulled on the solid oak door. As usual, it swung open wide. I entered with my eyes still feeling weary. With an effortless tug of the light switch, the room became full of light. I shuffled over to the sofa and disturbed the blanket that was always my sign of welcome. Extending both hands, I unraveled it. The T.V. remote bounced to the floor.

I picked it up, powered the TV on to the local news, sat comfortably on the sofa, and pulled the blanket over me. The clock over the fireplace assured me that I had time to take in some morning news, have coffee, and do some journaling before I got into the shower. I dimmed the ceiling light, closed my eyes, and pulled the quilt over me.

Only minutes had passed when the news anchor stated that there was a tragedy in Brownsville, Brooklyn yesterday. She said that a 34-year-old woman, Zurana Horton, was killed as she shielded some children from neighborhood gunfire. I sat erect and opened my eyes and listened to every word...<sup>21</sup>

This page from my journal documents the account of the first time I heard the name Zurana Horton. It was on a Saturday morning, October 22nd on the local news. During the time of the incident, my church was located in Brownsville and was engaged in collaborative projects with Michael Hooper from, Roots Revisited and The Late Jitu Weusi of the National Black United Front. We were concerned about violence and the lack of positive outlets for young people in the community. This incident heightened the urgency for this kind of work to continue.

About a week after her death, a mass of people took to the streets in the form of protests and rallies to bring attention to the senseless killings, and called for the violence

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<sup>21</sup> Writer's Journal Entry. *Morning Pages*, October 22, 2011.



to stop. On Saturday, November 5, 2011, hundreds gathered at the site where Zurana Horton was murdered and marched all the way to Camden Plaza. They carried coffins to dramatize the plight of a community carrying the burden of too many deaths. “Marchers said that poverty, unemployment and the lack of centers for youth create a climate of violence.”<sup>22</sup>

For a couple of months following the incident, there was a groundswell of anti-violence activities taking place in the community. This gave us a glimmer of hope that this tragic incident could be a blessing in disguise for Brownsville. Zurana’s sacrificial act touched people in a way that was unequivocal to any tragedy thus far. Perhaps this would be the catalyst to curb the tide of this violent culture. Unfortunately, by January of 2012, only 3 months later, the organizing activities and meetings had quieted down to a trickle.

During this lull, I developed a relationship with Zurana’s family. Her mother, Denise Peace, a retired healthcare worker is now raising 5 of Zurana’s children. She resides in the Bushwick community in Brooklyn. The father of the remaining 7 children has taken on the role of single parent. They are still living in Brownsville.

On Sunday, March 21, 2014, I visited Mrs. Peace and her grandchildren in their home. I told her about this demonstration project. She was excited and pledged her cooperation and support. I formally requested her permission to talk with her about Zurana’s life. She gladly complied. I crafted this short biography from the summation of the interview.

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<sup>22</sup> “Occupy Brownsville Marchers Over Brooklyn Bridge To City Hall”, November 7, 2011, <http://mcbrooklyn.blogspot.com/2011/11/occupy-brownsville-marches-over.html>.

Zurana Horton was born on June 14, 1977 in Bushwick, Brooklyn. She was a quiet child. She had two brothers and one sister. Both of her brothers were killed in separate gun violence incidents in Bushwick. Her brother, Quan was shot in a robbery in 1991 in Bushwick. He was only sixteen years old. The other brother, Zacquran was also shot and killed in Bushwick in 2010.

After leaving her mother's home, Zurana lived in East New York, and then moved to the Tilden Houses in Brownsville. Her life's journey of 34 years was one in search of love, peace, safety, and shelter for her children. She had an affinity for children and gave birth to 13 of them. One child preceded her in death. Zurana was a stay at home mother who devoted a lot of time to her children. She made sure that they were attended to and had safe sojourns to and from school. Three of her children live with special needs. She loved her children. When discipline was appropriate, she utilized strategies such as time out or the withholding of privileges. She made sure that their homework was completed before they could watch TV or have free time.<sup>23</sup>

The community lamented the death of this martyr. I have yet to meet anyone with something negative to say about her. Many people mentioned how much she loved and cared for her children. She was also characterized as a self-respecting person.

“She didn’t do no shouting,” said another resident, who identified herself as G.H. “You didn’t see her out here screaming. You didn’t see her out here disrespecting herself. You didn’t see her out here drinking. You didn’t see her doing anything out of the ordinary. She was a real down-to-earth mom.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Denise Peace, interview with author, Brooklyn, New York, March 21, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Arun Venugopal, “Hero” Mom Gunned Down Outside School Was Loving, Down to Earth,” wnyc.org, 24 October, 2011, <http://www.wnyc.org/story/166584-blog-brooklyn-mother-called-hero-death/>.

The tragedy of her death appeared to have been a commentary on neighborhood violence in rampant proportions. It drew the attention of a community larger than Brownsville. I have searched web sources and found dozens of articles on the details of her death. Some of the writers mention her deceased brothers. Most of them talked more about the details of the incident. In most articles, her death is inextricably tied to the state of affairs of Brownsville.

On the other hand, a couple of journalists questioned Zurana's integrity and attacked her character.

Instead of being heralded for her bravery, Horton's life is currently being held up for scrutiny and debate in the blogosphere. A typical post – Laurence Scott, a commenter on Global Grind, writes: 13 kids and pregnant and living in public housing. WOW. Rome is burning.' Meanwhile, on the New York Daily News site, commenters attack her – and each other – with ferocity. I wonder how much of my tax money, both NY and federal, is going to go to supporting those 13 kids for the next several decades,' writes one commenter. 'Hero? She would have been a hero if she had stopped at 2, at least to the rest of society that now has to pay for their welfare, education, Medicaid, food stamps. On [The Root](#), an African-American website published by the Washington Post (full disclosure: I am the site's senior editor), some took the 'blame the victim' route. Writes WandaDoesIt: Where it is OK for unmarried women to have 13 fatherless children can pretty much expect to have boys and young men shooting up the place ... It is so tragic, but we can't disconnect how she died from how she lived. Then there's BLKSeaGoat, who writes: Her death was sad and the act heroic, but given the demographics of the neighborhood, coupled with the fact that she was working on her 13th child, can anyone honestly believe that this outcome wasn't to be expected?' <sup>25</sup>

These writers indicted Zurana for the circumstances of her life rather than the heroism of her death. The stench of racism is blatant. The stereotype of a "Black welfare

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<sup>25</sup> Teresa Wiltz, "Zurana Horton was a hero – she just didn't look like one," [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com), 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/oct/26/zurana-horton-hero-children-gunfire>.

queen,” with a bunch of children living in public housing, is the narrative that has been assigned to the legacy of Zurana Horton. One writer articulates it well.

Most likely, if Zurana Horton were white and blonde, she would have been catapulted to the top of the news, her short and tragic story the stuff of People magazine covers and breathless segments on the Today show. After all, we're a society obsessed with the stories of pretty white women and girls who come up missing or dead. Witness the endless coverage over Natalee Holloway, or Caylee Anthony, or the scary story du jour: missing baby Lisa.

But Horton, who was 34, was neither white nor blonde nor particularly photogenic: the first published picture of her was a blurry shot where large sunglasses obscured most of her smiling face. Nor did she have the kind of squeaky-clean narrative that fits easily into the feel-good story mold. She was poor, unmarried and the mother of 13; she lived in Brownsville, one of Brooklyn's most notorious neighborhoods. And she was black.<sup>26</sup>

Within communities such as Brownsville, there are many deeply rooted problems impacting the lives of people. High rates of unemployment, homelessness, internal strife, crime, drug use and abuse, little or no access to quality education and health care, and mass incarceration just to name a few.

Zurana was a good person who was living in a disenfranchised, troubled community. Even during her death the blinders of racism, sexism, and classism prevented those with class privileges from seeing the ultimate “good” in this mother. The fact that she was given numerous awards posthumously was not given any media coverage.

### **Growing up in Poverty**

I consider Zurana’s narrative apart of a larger narrative of Black, Brown and poor people in this society. It is closely related to my story as an African-American woman. I was born in Charleston, South Carolina and grew up in a family of sharecroppers on a

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

farm in St. Stephens, South Carolina. I grew up in the bowels of Southern bigotry and uncompromising poverty.

My mother raised us with support from the extended family and the Black Church. There were 8 children in our family. My family received a smidgeon of a monthly allowance from public assistance. This was barely enough to sustain the family economically. Therefore, my mom became a sharecropper to make ends meet. We all worked on the farm.

The Church was an integral part of our family experiences. On Sundays, every household in my small community emptied out into rural, segregated churches. The people loved God. They talked about God all the time. I can still remember the colloquial phrases in Gullah dialect as the elders formulate theological claims: “God don’t like ugly!” “Jesus is coming back soon.” “God sits high and looks low.”

Our family attended a small Holiness Church. Attendance at Sunday school and Sunday morning worship service were customarily a requirement. The journey on foot to church took us through the woods and grassy paths, often across a couple of wooden planks over narrow streams of water.

I loved attending church. The preaching was dynamic and captivating. I got the opportunity to socialize with friends, and participate in Sunday school. It provided social outlets for me. I eagerly waited for holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. Our church designated a Sunday out of the year called, “Children’s Day.” On Children’s Day, young people were the focus of everybody’s attention during the service. We dressed up in our best clothing. Prior to each year’s celebration, our Sunday school teachers would work with each child on the selection of a piece of prose or poetry that had to be

committed to memory. On the day of the celebration, each child was able to stand in front of the congregation and recite his/her piece. Some children also sang and/or played a hymn on the piano or another instrument. At the end of every performance, the participant would bow before the congregation and walk proudly back to his/her seat. Then the congregation would always burst into applause and jubilant praise.

Christmas Pageants, Easter Plays, Egg Hunts, Summer Bible School and Children's Day Programs brought so much joy to the children in our church. I believe that the grown-ups enjoyed them just as much as we did, if not more. Even though I enjoyed church immensely, I felt that children were not on God's radar. I believed that as children, we had up until age 12 to have fun; then God wanted us to get serious about life and religious stuff.

I have vivid memories of the worship services in my childhood church. Worship services were characteristic of a Sunday morning Holy Ghost party: drums, guitars, tambourines, preaching, teaching, clapping, praising, singing, and shouting. Sunday hats and holy hands would fly up all over the church. Even the wooden planks on the country church floor rocked to the beat of Southern Gospel sounds.

I remembered the Bible being read and regarded as the inherent word of God. We had a big Bible in my home. However, I always thought of it as "my mother's Bible." She was the only one who read it often and always took it to church. As children, we did not have our own personal Bible. I am not sure if it was a matter of economic infeasibility or a lack of interest. The poor families on the sharecroppers' farm had spending priorities. Given the option, they chose food over books for their children.

In 1969, when I was 15, something happened that changed my life dramatically. I became a teenage mother. The consequences were major. It was during a period of time in the South when young women having children outside of marriage had to interrupt their education during the pregnancy. Some of them left the community to live elsewhere with relatives. Once returning to the community, they did not talk openly about the experience or the child. There were a few young expectant young women whose rapid departure from the neighborhood left everyone in question. Quite a few of them never returned. A minority of young expectant couples was forced into marriage. The economic responsibilities and social stigma bearing down on these couples resulted in the early demise of a significant percentage of these marriages.

The other circumstantial issue facing me at this tender age of 15 was my status with the church. Literally speaking, I grew up in the church and still loved attending. However, our church did not allow young pregnant, unmarried women to remain members. Even though we were invited to continue coming to worship, we were removed from the church's membership. After the child was born, the mother had the option of rejoining the church. I considered this church policy to be unfair and lacking in compassion. It was also humiliating. Imagine standing in the front of a congregation asking for forgiveness? I believe even a devout, faithful, mature believer would have difficulties complying with this requirement.

I considered this church policy to be sexist also. I felt as if I had been sentenced without a trial. My son's father appeared to have come out of the situation unscathed and was off to dating another young unsuspecting woman. At that time, I held my thoughts in my heart more so than my head. I did not have the courage, theological insight, or

acumen to have a mature, respectful discourse with my mother or the church leaders. I thought that it would have been a condemnation against God if I spoke out against the church's policy. Therefore, I kept silent and allowed the pain, anger and resentment to fester. Being left alone to carry the burden of guilt, shame, and scorn is quite heavy. Theologian Delores Williams describes the experience in a great Womanist Discourse, "*Sisters in the Wilderness – The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*." Williams defines in narrative terms the wilderness experience.

In the Biblical story Hagar's wilderness experience happened in a desolate and lonely wilderness where she – pregnant, fleeing from brutality of her slave owner, Sarai, and without protection – had religious experiences that helped her and her child survive when survival seemed doomed. For both Hagar and the African-American women, the wilderness experience meant standing utterly alone, in the midst of serious trouble, with only God's support to rely upon.<sup>27</sup>

Williams captures my feelings. For me, it was a time of adversity when I felt like I was standing alone. During that time, support was appropriately and desperately needed. If faith is not intrinsic, adversity can make a person vulnerable. There were no answers and many questions, and no resting place for the soul. It was a time when a lot of guidance, counseling, prayer, and nurturing were needed to quell the rushing waters of fear and doubt. If love and support had come from within the Body Of Christ at that time, I strongly believe that it could have helped me to avoid some turbulent times ahead.

### **Leaving My Mother's God**

After much deliberation and fanfare, my family orchestrated my exit from the community. I left my small hometown in June of 1969 under the pretense of visiting my sister for the summer. Like some of the other young girls in my community, I never went

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<sup>27</sup> Delores Williams, *Sisters In The Wilderness – The Challenge Of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), 109.



back to stay. I took up permanent residence with one of my older sisters in a small apartment in Brooklyn. At this crossroad in my life, it was difficult, but a relief to leave behind that small southern town, my childhood church, and my “Mother’s God.”

I stopped attending church after I came to New York. In doing so, I hoped that I was also getting further away from God and religion. I was still protesting having my church membership revoked.

Initially, when I came to New York, I lived in Brownsville. At that time, I knew little about New York and even less about Brownsville, and there were stern warnings in my enclave of the community about venturing into dangerous places. One of those places was the housing “projects” in Brownsville.

Upon my graduation from high school in 1972, my family moved to Crown Heights. I took advantage of the free tuition and attended City University. After college, my world seemed to have expanded in many directions: intellectually, socially, culturally, and politically. I became involved in the Social Justice Movement in New York, and I found my voice as an activist and a womanist. Unlike before, now I was prepared to talk about racism and sexism.

### **Meeting God in a New Place**

In 1983, my personal revolt against the church and God came to an end. I made peace with God after 15 tumultuous years. It happened in a small church in Brownsville on the first Sunday in May of 1983. I experienced a profound spiritual awakening. When it was over, I felt a renewal in my spirit and an indescribable resolve in my soul. Shortly thereafter, I recognized my call into ministry. I accepted my call, went to seminary, became ordained, and became the pastor of the Church of New Beginnings in 1994.

On December of 2012, Church of New Beginnings did something that we have done six times since the inception of the ministry in 1993. We packed up the supplies and moved the church to another location. On that crisp December morning, our small congregation of 25, mostly adult women and a sprinkling of children, arrived to prepare for the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

On this Sunday morning, we walked into the beautiful space of For My Sweet Garden Space and Kalahari Art Gallery, located on Fulton Street and Claver Place in Brooklyn, New York. This beautiful, renovated, ground level, spacious, open-air brownstone Art gallery in Central Brooklyn serves as a venue for many other community events.

As we prepared for service that December morning, I moved about the gallery feeling a bit nervous but very excited. I could not help but reflect on the journey in ministry of 18 years. Years back in December of 1993, there was no one except me attending to every detail. I remembered praying and preparing all week, and stayed up straight through the night to transform my Brooklyn Brownstone apartment into a worship space. Joyce Shelby, a New York Daily News reporter, captured the ministry's beginning in a 1996 article.

The Rev. Elizabeth Butler's calling card could easily read, "Have church, will travel," because that's exactly what Butler and her small congregation do almost every Sunday.

On the first Sunday of every month, the Church of New Beginnings meets at Butler's home in Bedford- Stuyvesant. The rest of the time, the congregation goes into the home of anyone who wants to have a service: homebound elderly people, people with AIDS, people in tough neighborhoods where Christians are few and far between, bereaved families- still too broken to attend church.

"We've gone into homes to dedicate babies. I just did two babies in the home of one family at Christmas. It was very special," said Butler.

The 42-year-old literacy teacher founded the nondenominational church three years ago to reach the “spiritually apathetic.”

Butler said she knew 10 years ago that she would become a pastor.

“Through my journey prior to starting a church, a number of people had told me if I ever did, they would want to be a part of it. I collected those names,” Butler said.

And when she was ready to start her church, she called the people who would need to help her fulfill her vision.

Ordained by American Baptist Church in 1991, Butler was an associate pastor at Salvation Baptist Church and director of the African American Women in Ministry at New York Theological Seminary.

The Charleston, South Carolina native came to Brooklyn as a teenager. She and her husband Clarence Michael Forestier have an adult son.

About twenty people showed up for the first Sunday service. Butler said soon afterward, the church began traveling.

When Butler and her congregation arrived for the 11am Sunday service, they have their own small lectern, Bibles, a cassette recorder, worship tapes, and the weekly church bulletin.

“Our services are lively,” said Butler, “Not as lively as the Pentecostals”, but there is freedom to express praise.”

Members also sometimes take food to serve during fellowship sessions after the worship service.

We want to give our host a sense of relief for the day. We tell them, “Don’t cook. We’ll bring the food”, Butler said.

And wherever the church goes, the offering plate is passed.

“We leave the offering at the home,” said Butler. They often try to give it back, but so often the home is in need. We tell them “You keep it.”

Hermina Jackson, who is a quadriplegic, said Church Of New Beginnings had a wonderful service at her home recently.

“It was just like church in my living room. I want to do it again, and one of my neighbors wants to have the service in a little bigger space so more people can come.” Jackson said.

“It’s a good idea for reaching out to people,” said Jackson, who lives in East New York.

Safiya Bandele, a member of Church of New Beginnings and director of the Center for Women’s development at Medgar Evers College, said the traveling experience allows people to break out of the traditional church mold.

“Particularly for the people who are distrustful who don’t like hypocrisy and disconnectedness often within the church. This church is the total opposite,” she said.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Joyce Shelby, “Spirit Moves Them to Worship,” *N.Y. Daily News*, March 3, 1996.

Leading up to that first service in 1993, I was an associate pastor at Salvation Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York. The senior pastor was the (late) Rev. Dr. Lucius Walker Jr. I was able to exercise my gifts and skills in preaching, teaching, and other aspects of ministry. Pastor Walker was a great pastor and mentor, and faith-rooted organizer. His activism gained him local, national, and international recognition. Even before it was politically expedient, he worked unceasingly on lifting the blockade to deliver material aid to Cuba.

The Rev. Dr. Lucius Walker, a Baptist minister who gained national attention with calls for reparations for the descendants of slaves and with repeated violations of the United States embargo of Cuba through caravans of humanitarian aid, Mr. Walker's life was transformed on Aug. 2, 1988, as he led a delegation on a fact-finding trip to Nicaragua, where contra rebels were battling the government. Pastor Walker and others were wounded and two others were killed on that mission. He later founded the, Pastors for Peace organization. Pastors for Peace is an ecumenical agency whose mission is to help forward the struggles of oppressed peoples for justice and self-determination. The organization has now sent hundreds of tons of aid, including medical gear and roofing material, to Latin American countries. Of its 40 missions so far, 21 have been to Cuba.

In addition to organizing supply missions, Rev. Walker was the founding director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization and negotiated an agreement with Cuban officials allowing dozens of American children from poor areas to study at Havana's Latin American School of Medicine. As part of that program, American graduates are expected to return to the United States, get medical licenses and provide care in underserved communities.<sup>29</sup>

Working with Pastor Lucius Walker was inspiring. It afforded me the opportunity to mesh my political and theological ideologies. When I joined the ministerial staff of Salvation Baptist Church in 1988, I was already involved in social activism work in New York City for at least 10 years, and was deeply entrenched in working on issues impacting the lives of disadvantaged families and children in New York. I was also

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<sup>29</sup> Douglas Martin, "Baptist Pastor For Peace Dies At 80," *New York Times*, Sept 11, 2010.

travelling nationally and internationally, making connections to build solidarity with indigenous women's organization.

Church of New Beginnings is a small congregation, yet gigantic in passion, and has a history and spirit-filled mission of social justice ministry.<sup>30</sup> We have worked with many organizations, activists, and individuals to address injustice across New York City, including but not limited to: The National Black United Front, The Coalition For A Quality Education, The Freedom Party, Center For Women's Development At Medgar Evers College, Occupy Wall Street, The Brownsville Residents, Activists, Concerned Citizens, Clergy and Friends (BRACC-CAF) Committee, and Legacy Organizing Committee to save the True South Bookstore.

### **The Implications of Untreated Trauma**

My late husband, Clarence Michael Forestier (aka Michael) was a case study of sorts bearing similarities to many of the young lives in Brownsville. In 1987, I met Michael in Sing Sing Prison, where he was incarcerated. On that occasion, I was invited by the late Dr. Bill Weber of New York Theological Seminary to a graduation ceremony of the Master's Program in Sing Sing. Michael and I conversed on that day and wrote to each other after the graduation. We developed a personal relationship over time and got married in the chapel of Arthur Kill Prison in 1994.

After his release, a couple of years later, Michael became gainfully employed immediately. He attended worship services and kept his appointments with his parole officer. Upon being released from parole, Michael ended his mandated counseling

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<sup>30</sup> Safiya Bandele, personal interview by author, Brooklyn New York, October 20th, 2011.

sessions against my wishes. I wanted him to continuing counseling with a psychotherapist.

As the years passed, I became more and more concerned about Michael's stability and the state of our marriage. We were gradually spending less time together. Gradually, Michael spent more time in "the streets" and experienced some encounters with law enforcement. He was arrested a couple of times. It became evident that he was in trouble. Then the tragic news came.

I went to work on Thursday, December 7, 2007, anticipating a fairly routine day. At 3:58p.m. 3 NYC Police Detectives came to my job to share some unfortunate news. My husband, Michael, had passed away. The news resounds in my mind just as if it was shared on yesterday. "Your husband passed away at 1:17a.m. this morning."

At the age of 54, eleven days short of our 14<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, my husband Michael was now absent from life; killed by tragic means. He had returned to the life of an unresolved past and did not make it out alive.

Michael was an intelligent man with enormous potential. He came from humble beginnings and overcame some insurmountable odds. He was raised by a drug addicted, single mother. During his childhood, he discovered the dead body of his mother slouched over the bathroom sink in their apartment. Afterwards, All five of the children were placed in kinship foster care with his grandmother.

His life encountered many challenges. His personal choices and activities placed him under the supervision of the juvenile justice system early on in his life. He attended an alternative school for at-risk boys and sought gratification in the culture of drug dealing and street violence. This resulted in him serving time in prison.

What could have altered the tragic course of my late husband's life? How could he have acquired some survival tools and skills to deal with the trauma and make better choices? I believe that intervention during the early years would have been helpful. There is compelling evidence in the research that unless there is intervention, children can suffer severe and lasting emotional distress from trauma and violence, and may become more likely to perpetrate violence themselves.<sup>31</sup> Communities must be a place where families live, thrive, and feel safe. It must be a place where children have outlets for positive engagement. Sometimes, the social agencies, organizations, and institutions neglect the people that they are designed to serve. When this happens, the community must seek to empower itself and look out for the welfare of all involved, particularly children.

### **Collective Courage**

The African-American Community has a history and tradition of helping itself. I grew up in the Jim Crown South but felt safe in my community. The support of the church, extended family, and the larger community helped to insulate me from some of the daily indignities of racism. My teachers in school helped me to dream past the boundaries set by the White Supremacist culture.

Many people collaborated to help us thrive under the most adverse social conditions. The church ministered to our spirits and assisted us materially. The Black sharecropper helped to give us access to financial resources. We lived off the land by fishing, farming, and raising poultry. The goods and wares made available from the

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<sup>31</sup> James Garbarino, Catherine P. Bradshaw and Joseph A. Vorrasi, "Mitigating the Effects Of Gun Violence on Children And Youth," *The Future Of Children*, vol. 12. No. 2. (Summer-Autumn 2002) 73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1602739> (accessed 12/18/14).

craftsmanship of other community folks enabled us to barter resources. The community midwives were equipped to attend to the delivery of children. The seamstresses took care of the communities' tailoring, designing and fashion needs. As we helped ourselves, money stayed within the community, which economically empowered the community.

Jessica Gordon Nembhard wrote a phenomenal book entitled, *Collective Courage – A History Of African American Cooperative Economic Thought And Practice*. Her book is a research-based history of Black economic thought, traditions, and enterprises. Nembhard makes the convincing point in her book that “historically, the African-American Community has showed a willingness and ability to organize themselves in order to survive enslavement and poverty.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, she stated that:

In every period of American history, African Americans pooled resources to solve personal, family, social, political, and economic challenges. They often addressed freedom, health, child development, education, burial, employment, and investment ventures in ways that leveraged and maximized returns and reduced risks. African Americans formed distinct, purposive, and formal (as well as informal) organizations through which to coordinate and channel collective action and joint ownership. Many of these were stable collective organizations that lasted for decades. They used existing connections and affiliations- religious, fraternal, geographical, and political – to develop new organizations or promote new missions. These existing networks provided the sense of trust and solidarity that often helped solidify the new effort.<sup>33</sup>

Our ancestors struggles to organized and empowered themselves during some of the more challenging times in history were inspiring. It served as a legacy and a framework for this work in ministry. As I worked with the residents of Brownsville, and the Site Team, we operated within this collective thought and practice framework. My

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<sup>32</sup> Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage – A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought And Practice*, (University Park Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 33.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 29.



Community Organizing Cohort Members, The Director of the Doctor Of Ministry Program at New York Theological Seminary, my advisor, and my church are a part of this initiative to put something in place that does not exist in Brownsville.

### **Purpose of Study**

I come to this endeavor as an activist minister with 31 years of experience in Brooklyn, New York. The statistics indicate that Brownsville is still in trouble as a community. More than half of the children are living below the federal poverty level.<sup>34</sup> I mention in my introduction that the community is rated as one of the most violent in New York City. It lacks adequate resources to address these problems. This demonstration project was designed to create a strategic plan for a Children's Initiative (honoring Zurana Horton) to provide positive outlets for a targeted number of children whose lives have been directly impacted by street violence in the Brownsville Community.

This initiative is a long-term project requiring much organization and coordination of resources, funds and support. Therefore, the Site Team and I mutually agreed to limit the work of this project to accessing the needs, raising awareness about the project's purpose and mission, building a team, and developing a strategic plan for the fund. The targeted population for the project is ages 6-17 years old. Considering that Brownsville is so big, it was most feasible to pilot the project with a smaller target population. I decided to work with the children and families in the Howard Houses Development to launch the project.

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<sup>34</sup> Citizens' Committee For Children Of New York, <http://www.cccnewyork.org/pess/releases/citizens-committee-for-children-releases-keeping-track-2013-comprehensive-databook-on-new-york-citys-children/> (accessed 1/6/15).

## CHAPTER 2

### ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

#### **Children Are Worth Dying For**

Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising, then, to learn the traditional greeting that passed between Masai warriors: "Kasserian Ingera," one would always say to another. It means, "And how are the children?"

It is still the traditional greeting among the Masai, acknowledging the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well being. Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional answer, "All the children are well." Meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place. That Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being, its proper functions and responsibilities. "All the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles for existence do not preclude proper caring for their young.

I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children's welfare if in our culture we took to greeting each other with this daily question: "And how are the children?" I wonder if we heard that question and passed it along to each other a dozen times a day, if it would begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of or cared about in our own country.

I wonder if every adult among parent, non-parent and us alike, felt an equal weight for the daily care and protection of all the children in our community, in our town, in our state, in our country . . . I wonder if we could truly say without any hesitation, "The children are well, yes, all the children are well. "

What would it be like . . . if the minister began every worship service by answering the question, "And how are the children?" If every town leader had to answer the question at the beginning of every meeting: "And how are the children? Are they all well?" Wouldn't it be interesting to hear their answers? What would it be like? I wonder . . .<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Adapted by Pat Hoertdoerfer from an excerpt of a speech by Rev. Dr. Patrick T. O'Neill.

We live in a society where the welfare of young adults is not necessarily high on the nation's agenda. The adage, "children should be seen and not heard" has customarily set the tone for the order of business where the youth is concerned. The atrocities involving today's youth are not going away. In response, the persistent cries for equality have become a rallying call. Whether it may be poverty, sexual exploitation, physical abuse, labor, malnutrition, bullying, poor education or community violence, children proportionally bear their share of society's sacrifice and suffering. In some of these areas, they are actually overrepresented.

### **Children and Violence**

Let's look at the issue of violence. Our research revealed that the problem of community violence, particularly gun violence, has become a major public health and safety issue. Relevant research indicates that children in inner cities are subjected to a high rate of significant acts of violence in their neighborhoods, and/or schools. It is reported that eighty to ninety percent of urban children fall in this category.<sup>36</sup> These children are either direct victims or witnesses.<sup>37</sup> "Fatal violence from handguns alone has claimed the lives of more American and youths over the past decade and a half than the total number of American soldiers killed in the Vietnam War."<sup>38</sup> According to the Children's Defense Fund, the statistical comparison of the United States to 26 other high-income countries revealed that the U.S. is comprised of only 43 percent of all the children

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<sup>36</sup> K.M. Fitzpatrick, J.P. Boldzier (1993) The Prevalence And Consequences of Exposure to Violence Among African-American Youth, *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 32. 424-430.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Neil B. Guterman and Mark Cameron. "Assessing the Impact of Community Violence on Children and Youths." *Social Work* 42, no. 5: (September 1997) 495-505. Academic Search Premier. EBSCOhost (accessed November 16, 2014).

and teens, but had the highest percentage: 93 percent, of those killed by gun violence.<sup>39</sup>

The same source reported that nationally, gun violence led all other causes of deaths among African-American children and teens between ages 1-19.<sup>40</sup> The Children Defense Fund examined the records of lynching of African-American people in the United States between the years of 1882 to 1968. They compared it to the number of children and teens killed by gun violence from 1963 to 2010. The number of African-American children and youth killed by gun violence in 47 years (1963-2010) exceeded the total number of all people lynched in 87 years (1882-1968) by 17 times.<sup>41</sup>

It is a sad commentary to learn through the work of this demonstration project the perception of young people in Brownsville toward violence and guns. Through our community engagement questionnaires, we found that young people view gun violence as a major problem in the community of Brownsville.<sup>42</sup> However, they feel powerless to do anything about it. In many of their extended responses on the questionnaires, there were underlying pleas to adults to do something about the violence in their communities. During the focus group session, one young focus group participant said, “when we speak to you adults, ya’ll do not listen. When we say that we are afraid, ya’ll keep fighting among yourselves and pay us no attention.”

The Center For Court Innovations conducted a comprehensive survey in 2010 of residents in Brownsville. Their findings supported the results of our community

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<sup>39</sup> Children Defense Fund. Protect Children, Not Guns, [www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-publication/data/protect-children-not-guns2013.pdf](http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-publication/data/protect-children-not-guns2013.pdf) (accessed December 23, 2015), 34.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 26.

engagement questionnaire in that over 80 percent of their respondents identified gun violence as a major problem in their community.<sup>43</sup> In 2013, the Center For Court Innovations conducted a Baseline Community Survey Sample Demographics of 324 residents in preparation for the Brownsville Anti-Violence Project. The results revealed that,

Over half of the survey sample (53%) reported that it is “very common” for youth in the neighborhood to carry guns, and more than 40% reported hearing gun shots in the neighborhood. Of particular concern for the antiviolence project, a substantial minority of the survey respondents (38%) reported that is “sometimes necessary for people in Brownsville to carry a gun to protect themselves or their family.”<sup>44</sup>

It is evident that the issue of gun violence in Brownsville is more than just a notion. It defines the context for how the people live, move and breathe. Street violence has resulted in the senseless death of many whose blood is permanently imbedded in Brownsville’s soil. Victims have been as young as one-year-old. On September 1, 2013, a baby, Antiq Hennis was in his stroller being pushed by his father Anthony Hennis, when he was killed by gunfire. It was reported that the shots were aimed at Antiq’s father.<sup>45</sup> The father was not injured in the incident.

In our focus groups, quite a few of the participants were living with the memory of loved ones that were senselessly killed in the community. Many of them shared how they had been left alone to live with the grief all by themselves. The mother of Simeon

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<sup>43</sup> Suvi Hynynen, “Community Perceptions Of Brownsville – A Survey Of Neighborhood Quality of Life, Safety, and Services (New York: Center For Court Innovations, 2011), 3. <http://www.courtinnovations.org> (accessed 12/26/14).

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Picard-Fritsche, Rachael Swaner, and Suvi Hynynen Lambson. “*Deterrence and Legitimacy in Brownsville Brooklyn*, Center For Court Innovations, June 2014, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Jen Maxfield, Brynn Gingras, and Katherine Creag, “Boy, 1, Fatally Shot While Crossing Street with Parents,” [www.nbcnewyork.com](http://www.nbcnewyork.com), 3 September 2013, <http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Chici-Shot-Head-brownsville-Brooklyn-222016871.html>.

Allen, 21, was fairly new to the Brownsville, Howard Houses. Her family was transferred to the Howard Houses Development from Far Rockaway after Hurricane Sandy in October 2012.

She shared that her son was a promising young man. He was coming from work when he was killed by two gunshots in front of the Howard Houses Early Childhood Development Center on March 14, 2014. Simeon's mom barely knew her way around the neighborhood, but came to the focus group session, still clutching the small memorial placard bearing Simeon's face. She took time to recite the Psalm 121 as she held the placard to her chest and fought back tears. Her remarks made it evident that she feels trapped in this neighborhood that took her son away. Her desire is to get out as soon as possible. Additionally, she felt that it is imperative for families of gun violence victims to get some support.

Brownsville is commonly known as a dangerous neighborhood and is often referred to as the "murder capital of New York."<sup>46</sup> In May of 2014, Brownsville's police precinct, the 73<sup>rd</sup>, reported that violent crimes in Brownsville had increased from the previous year; more people were shot in Brownsville than all of the communities in Manhattan.<sup>47</sup>

Simeon and scores of others that were senselessly killed in Brownsville did not get the local or national attention that some of the other young men and women have received. The mobilization of people calling for justice after the murders of: Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Tamisha McBride, John Crawford, and

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<sup>46</sup> Crime and Safety Report, "Brownsville" [www.dnainfo.com](http://www.dnainfo.com) (Accessed December 24, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

others has swelled into social justice movements across the country and world. Many nationalities of people have come together demanding justice. Some of the youth resistance organizations that have distinguished themselves within this national movement are Dream Defenders, Lost Voices, Hands Up United, National Black United Front and Ferguson Action.

The circumstances surrounding the above cases implicate race as the primary factor that vindicated justice and a fair outcome. With a few exceptions, this is not the situation in Brownsville. It is the predominant perception that Brownsville is a community plagued with Black on Black Crime. Many of them cite gang rivalry as the main culprit. Law enforcement concurs: “The bloodshed is rooted in turf battles that are typical of rival crews. It’s the same problem—young kids with guns –senseless disputes over territory.”<sup>48</sup> One young person from the community (who wishes to remain anonymous) told me that the gun violence in Brownsville is acts of retaliation that may go back for years. He believes that if one could successfully get the opposing sides in a room, the healing could begin.

It appears that there is information within community networks about the identity of the killers. However, there remains a wall of silence. For any number of reasons, fear being the obvious, the residents do not turn the killers into the authorities. One of the few exceptions was Zurana Horton’s case. Her case drew more national attention than most in Brownsville. Perhaps, the visual of a mother’s breathless, bloody body draped over children, struck strong emotional chords from so many people. This mom who was

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<sup>48</sup> Natalie Musumeci and Rocco Parascandola, “Gun Violence rises in Brownsville where cops see more shootings than any other precinct,” [www.nydailynews.com](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/b-kln-neighborhood-troubled-gun-violence-article-1.1799868), 21 May, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/b-kln-neighborhood-troubled-gun-violence-article-1.1799868>.

helping to hold up the sky for her 12 children and was desecrated by a senseless pathology. This was an opportunity for the community including all warring sides to rise out of the disparity and fight for the welfare of the community. A movement sprang into action but faded away quickly.

Law enforcement exerted some strenuous effort and swift tactics to solve the case quickly. Numerous young men were scooped up, taken into custody, and detained on Rikers Island. The investigators gave little regard to civil rights or personal liberties of the individuals.

### **Struggles and Sacrifices**

History documents the value of young people's contributions to human rights struggle. Their involvement was and remains a significant entity in the human and civil rights struggle, especially in the 1960's.<sup>49</sup> "The children's crusade added a new dynamic to the struggle in Birmingham and was a major factor in the success of the campaign."<sup>50</sup> One writer stated that, "with heads erect, backs unbowed, fearless and unafraid, proud of their place of honor in the van of a whole people's iron-willed and determined march toward a genuine freedom, the unfailing steps of the Negro youth have set a new pace for all those who struggle on the frontiers of social progress and a new and lofty standard of courage for its fighters to emulate".<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, the horrific, senseless deaths of many young people have given righteously indignant human beings the moral resolve to fight for justice. The bombing of

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<sup>49</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., Address Delivered at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. May 3, 1963.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> James Jackson. *US Negroes In Battle: From Little Rock To Watts* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967) page 16.



the Sixteenth Street Church in Birmingham Alabama where Denise McNair (11), Addie Mae Collins (14), Carole Robertson (14) and Cynthia Wesley (14) were killed will never be forgotten.

And four little children were blasted to death on a September, Sunday when segregationist revenge-seekers lobbed a 15-stick of dynamite through the basement window of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Church in Birmingham where 80 Negro children were in Sunday School classes... In the basement, the horribly mangled bodies of the four little girls lay buried under the rubble. The head of Denise McNair, who had taken the full blast of the explosive, was severed from her body, and the rest of her was cut up in little pieces in the shambles of rubble that once was a Sunday school class.<sup>52</sup>

Twenty-three other people were also hurt by the blast.<sup>53</sup> Two years later, in 1955, 14 years old Emmett Tills' body was fished out of the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi.<sup>54</sup> On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks made a statement of resistance by refusing to get up and give her seat to a white passenger on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama.<sup>55</sup> I once heard that Rosa Parks stated that during her act of resistance she had the death of Emmitt Till on her mind.<sup>56</sup> When she remained in her seat in 1955, it was a statement against the death of Emmitt Till and the other beatings, and killings that had taken place in the south.

In the 60's, the impact of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Council) was felt as young students organized, mobilized, and strategized to protest segregation and

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<sup>52</sup> James Jackson. *US Negroes In Battle: From Little Rock To Watts* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), 41-42.

<sup>53</sup> Emmitt Till Historic Intrepid Center, Civil Rights Study Tour, caption, Glendora Mississippi, April 6, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Paula Giddings, *When And Where I Enter: The Impact Of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984), 257-265.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Howard Robinson, *"Veterans Of The Civil Rights Struggle"* (lecture, National Center For the Study Of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University, Montgomery, Alabama, April 2, 2013).

injustice. “SNCC was formed in the 1960 to coordinate the activities of the students engaged in direct action protest such as sit-ins and jail-ins in the south.”<sup>57</sup> “It achieved enormous results in the desegregation of public facilities and earned respect from the country for its determination to act peacefully, no matter how violent or demeaning the provocation.”<sup>58</sup>

Around the same time, the oppressed in South Africa were struggling for basic rights, privileges, and dignity under apartheid. The indigenous people of South Africa lived under the tight regiment of Apartheid and were subjected to the imposition of laws and codes of the most dehumanizing nature. Being stripped of basic rights and freedom exposed the indigenous people to the susceptibility of a repressive, social and political structure, with the intent of dominating and criminalizing a race of people.

The anti- apartheid movement was infused with the energy of young people. In June of 1976, hundreds of children walked out of school in South Africa in defiance of a school policy to make the dominant class’ language the primary instructional language.<sup>59</sup> This act of determination added fuel to the ongoing struggle against Apartheid and was not without young casualties.

Hector Peterson, a 13-year-old student, was among the first students in the Soweto Uprisings to be shot dead by the police at the gate of Orlando West High

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<sup>57</sup> Harry A. Ploski and James Williams, editors, *Reference Library Of Black America*, vol. 1, (Gale Research Inc.: African-American Press, 1990), 271

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Marian Shinn, “When Alexandria went up in flames” 1987, in “*Soweto: The Fruit of Fear*” edited by Peter Magubane (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press) no pages numbers.

School.<sup>60</sup> Many more children were among others who died, were shot, beaten, or went missing during the uprising.<sup>61</sup> This summoned the world to stand up and take notice.

Another causality of the human rights struggle was a young gallant revolutionary, Steven Bantu Biko (Steve Biko). Biko was a medical student at Natal University and founder of the Black Consciousness Movement in South African. He had some firm ideological thoughts about what it meant for the people of South Africa to be self-determining.

Biko and his colleagues felt Blacks needed to learn to speak for themselves. In fact, as Pityana (a friend of Biko) recalled, for white students, “the National Union Of South African Students (NUSAS) was a nice friendly club, another game you played while at university. Then you grew out of it,” but for Biko and other black students, NUSAS was not militant enough. Other liberal organizations like some churches were not open to blacks either. For Example, at a non-racial church conference, which Biko attended, white participants discouraged blacks from defying restrictions of the Group Areas Act, which limited Blacks to 72 hours in a white area. Being told how students should act annoyed Biko very much. It also underlined the extent to which Black South Africans were isolated even in the churches.<sup>62</sup>

Among the contemporary young activists who are capturing the attention of the world is Malala Yousafzai from Swat Valley in Pakistan. Currently, she and her family have taken up refuge in Britain after Malala was shot in the head three times by the Taliban on October 9, 2012. She is known as the “girl who refused to be silenced” and stood up for the rights of girls to be educated.<sup>63</sup> “She miraculously survived and

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<sup>60</sup> Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprising* (South Africa: South African Democracy Education Trust: 2007) 344.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 350.

<sup>62</sup> Youth African History Online, Steven Bantu Biko, <http://www.sahistory.org.za> (accessed December 25, 2014).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, jacket.

continues her campaign for the education of girls.”<sup>64</sup> Malala’s courage, passion for justice, and relentless advocacy on behalf of injustice, gave her a place in the history of humankind. In November of 2014, another notation was inscribed in history. Malala became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Her speech in acceptance of her Nobel Prize reflected the depth of her passion and breath of her activism as a freedom fighter.

I have had two options- one was to remain silent and wait to be killed. And the second was to speak up and be killed. I chose the second one. I decided to speak up... The terrorists tried to stop us. Neither their ideas nor their bullets could win. We survive. And since that day, our voices have grown louder and louder... This award is not just for me. It is for those forgotten children who want education. It is for those frighten children who want peace. It is for those voiceless children who want change. I am here to stand up for the rights, to raise their voice. It is not time to pity them.<sup>65</sup>

We were reminded of an epic case of police violence and brutality as we viewed the movie Fruitvale Station early in 2013. The killing of young Oscar Grant in California on December 31, 2008 was an atrocity and mobilized the nation in a unanimous call for justice. It echoed the questionable killings of so many other young people, including but not limited to, ten-year-old Clifford Glover, fourteen-year-old Claude Reese, fifteen-year-old Randolph Evans, and twenty-three-year-old Michael Griffith. All of these were unarmed youths who were killed between the years of 1973-1986 in New York.

In the Brownsville Community, there have been noteworthy contributions of young people in the struggle for freedom and justice. During World War II in the 40’s, it

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<sup>64</sup> Malala Yousafzai, *I Am Malala* (New York: Little, Brown & Company: 2013) 211-12.

<sup>65</sup> Pamela Engel, “Malala Gives A Jaw-Dropping speech To Accept Her Nobel Peace Prize,” [www.businessinsider.com](http://www.businessinsider.com) (accessed December 23, 2014).

is reported that children in Brownsville demonstrated a great sense of social consciousness.

The children of Jewish families in Brownsville collected grease cans which were needed for glycerin in the manufacture of bombs. They collected used tires for the rubber. Brownsville kids helped with everything from blood drives to raising funds for the starving war overseas. Some were school or class-run activities. Others were done on individual initiative and collections were duly turned over to the authorities. War bond efforts were a nationwide effort and Brownsville raised an enormous sum of money for a working class neighborhood -15 million dollars. Kids participated through Savings stamps books, which, when you filled one up to the lordly sum of \$18.75 could be converted into a single \$25.00 War bond.<sup>66</sup>

In the 60's, some native young activists such as, Paul Chandler utilized their skills and passion in the struggle for tenants' rights. As a member of (CUSA) Christian and Jews United For Social Action young Paul Chandler and others organized and mobilized tenants against slumlords. The group also used other nonviolent protest tactics, including sit-ins at local government offices, to pressure officials to respond to tenants' complaints.<sup>67</sup>

The struggle for community control of education in Ocean Hill, Brownsville continued in the 60's when children joined others to bring about change that impacted the quality of education throughout New York City. Students participated in the boycott on a high level. For example, on February 3, 1964, 464,000 students, 45 percent of the student body, and 90 percent of Brownsville's students joined the boycott.<sup>68</sup> More than a decade of community struggle scored a victory with respect to the decentralization of education.

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<sup>66</sup> Sylvia Siegel Schildt, *Brownsville: The Jewish Years*, (Kentucky: Booksurge, 2007), 54-55.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 223-224.

It resulted in the development of local community districts having control over policies, staffing and running local schools.

There are still young people in Brownsville who are investing in their community to make it a safe place for children and families to live and thrive. They are realistic about the state of affairs of their community, but reject that in Brownsville “optimism feels out of reach.”<sup>69</sup> In Chapter 6, we will talk more about these initiatives and organizations that are for young people - by young people.

### **The Challenges**

As we conversed with the residents of Brownsville through focus groups, awareness raising events, and engagement questionnaires, it was evident that there is a gap in communication and perspective between the young adults and elders in the community. Many of the young people were less likely to see themselves as the source of the problems in Brownsville.

Brownsville residents were asked to rate issues in the neighborhood as a big problem, minor problem, not a problem, or don't know. Of the list of 18 community issues, over 50 percent of residents stated that 13 of them were big problems in the neighborhood. Overall, 80 percent of residents identified guns, gangs, drug use, drug selling, and assault as the top community problems. The top five quality of life issues were identified as obesity and other public health problems, homelessness, public drinking, garbage removal and run down public spaces.<sup>70</sup>

In this same survey, Center for Court Innovation analyzed the response of the community's youth of problems in the community.

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<sup>69</sup> Brownsville Community Justice Center, Brownsville Anti-Violence Project Fact Sheet, distributed at Brownsville Justice Center Advisory Council Meeting, at Howard Houses Community Center, Brooklyn, N.Y., June 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Suvi Hynynen, “Community Perceptions Of Brownsville – A Survey Of Neighborhood Quality of Life, Safety, and Services (New York: Center For Court Innovations, 2011), 3. <http://www.courtinnovations.org> (accessed 12/26/14).

Twenty-one questions were related to youth crime and other youth issues. The issues considered to be the biggest youth problems were unemployment (81 percent), few adult role models (77 percent), drug use (76 percent), drug selling (75 percent), and teen pregnancy (72 percent) and nothing to do after school (72 percent). Almost every issue asked in relation to youth was considered to be a “big problem” (the options were big problem, minor problem, not a problem, and don’t know). Of the people surveyed, 12 percent were considered youth (ages 16-24). In general, youth were less likely than those 25 and older to consider issues as big problems. A significantly lower percentage of youth identified drug use, drug selling, the lack of educational opportunities, and depression as big problems than did adults. To youth, the biggest issues were: unemployment (73 percent), teen pregnancy (73 percent), using weapons (69 percent), and few adult role models (63 percent).<sup>71</sup>

This void between youth and elders is a serious problem nowadays. It was illuminated in a focus session of adults through sentiments such as:

“These children don’t go to school.”  
“These children don’t have any manners these days.”  
“These children are having babies too young.”  
“Lord, I don’t know about these children.”  
“I don’t know why these children are wearing their pants hanging off their behinds.”  
“Stop and frisk is a good, cause these kids be up to no good.”

With such indifference, the question becomes, how do we engage the elders, and find common ground to put something in place for the young people in Brownsville? In the larger context, things in our society are divided along the lines of race and class. Compared to their White counterparts, many African-American youths will more likely receive an inferior quality of education, stand a greater chance of being underemployed or imprisoned, would more likely be stopped by the police, or killed in acts of racial

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 4.

violence.<sup>72</sup> Not only are they experiencing external racial profiling from the larger society, they are also subjected to it within the confines of their community.

The community's youth is the fruits of the family lineage and should not be treated as aliens within the community. Mothers and fathers were proud when they came home with awards from assemblies, sports, and scholastic events, and received distinction at graduations and special events.

Then at some point during the maturation process, something became unraveled. A new zone comprised of Hip Hop, texting, social media, and friends encapsulated the teenager in a cocoon that was foreign to the elders. Not knowing how to penetrate this bubble, elders retreated into another zone of fear and judgments. Often times, elders clutched their personal possessions and seal their lips as youngsters approached, praying that the encounter yield an amicable passing.

Perhaps, at-risk young people are exhibiting the symptoms of tender hearts hardened against a generation of parents who have failed them; parents who have allowed them to be seduced into exile in their own community. Their rage may be a mask for anger, fear, and confusion. Could it be that the young people (Brownsville included) are indignant that their mothers' and fathers' have become emotionally unavailable, detached, and have relinquished social control of them to authorities, volatile groups, and dictates of popular culture?<sup>73</sup> "Accordingly, the agencies of nurturance and development (family and school) have all but relinquish the privileges of discipline and responsibility

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<sup>72</sup> The Silent Genocide – Facts about the Deepening Plight of Black Men in America, <http://www.blackstarproject.org> (accessed February 13, 2015).

<sup>73</sup> Nathan Hare, PhD. and Julia Hare, M. M. Ed., *The Endangered Black Family-Coping with the Unisexualization and Coming Extinction of the Black Race*, (San Francisco, CA.: Black Think Tank, 1984), 131.



for child guidance to the agencies of punishment and rehabilitation (courts, the judges, the police, the professional correctors such as counselors and psychotherapists).”<sup>74</sup>

Regardless of the challenges, there must be a commitment to support the children in Brownsville. I often refer to them as ”Zurana’s Children.” They deserve a chance like all others to fulfill their purpose in life. There are many socially conscious, intelligent, ambitious young people in Brownsville who thirst for a deeper engagement. All they need to soar is a level playing field. This writer saw reflections of her childhood in many of them. During her childhood growing up in uncompromising poverty and unbridled bigotry in the South, many people nurtured her development with kindness, encouragement, and support. Due to the Blessings of God, the love of my family and the support of many people, I have reached horizons in life that I never thought possible.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Brownsville: The Early Years**

One of the research questions for this demonstration project focused on the history of Brownsville. It was pertinent to this topic to probe sources for threads that may connect Brownsville's past to the present. There is not an abundance of books written on this topic, but we came across some meaningful resources. Among them are *Brownsville, Brooklyn, Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* by Wendell Pritchett and *Brownsville: The Jewish Years, Celebrating Hope, Hard Work, Tolerance, and Triumph of the Human Spirit* by Sylvia Siegel Schildt.

Pritchett 2002 publication was one of the more well-researched publications that was available. He was cited in the majority of the other relevant resources. There are a number of writers that even did book reviews on his book. One reviewer said, "Wendell has a remarkable social and political history of Brownsville, a section of eastern Brooklyn, that will set the pace for all future analyses of the ghetto."<sup>75</sup> Another writer said, "Pritchett has given us a careful, well documented history of an American urban community. The book makes an important contribution to social history and is a sensitive study of intergroup relations. The tribulations and successes of immigrants, first from

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<sup>75</sup> Komozi Woodard, review of Brownsville Brooklyn: *Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* by Wendell Pritchett, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 107, no 5 (December 2002): 1590. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532936>.

Europe and later from the American South and the Caribbean, comprise a very American story.”<sup>76</sup>

The focus of many of the other writers’ work was rather narrow. They primarily focused on the earlier history of Brownsville that is commonly known as the “Jewish Years.” This period spanned from around 1590’s to 1960. Pritchett’s book is the best resource that provides a documented history from 1590 to the present.

Many of the materials were found online that provided some insight to our research questions. Some of them were pieces of sensational journalism. More often than not, they pitched the community as the most dangerous in the nation. For this reason, this researcher made careful selections of cited resources.

The thrust of the research dates the beginning of Brownsville back to 1861. Two years prior, in 1858, a man named William Suydam suffered a financial setback after he went bankrupt due to a faulty real estate investment. He converted a large farm in New Lots (Brooklyn) into small single-family houses and placed them on the market.<sup>77</sup> The geography of the area made it difficult for him to rent the houses. “It was full of low-lying marshes, prone to flooding, had few of the aesthetic attractions of other parts of Brooklyn. When the wind blew, residents frequently smelled the bone-boiling plants from Jamaica Bay.”<sup>78</sup> The Weekly Nabe described the area as a “landlocked area of

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<sup>76</sup> Marcus Alexis, review of Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto by Wendell Pritchett, *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 64, no. 1 (Mar. 2004): 239. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3874950>.

<sup>77</sup> Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago, Ill.: University Of Chicago Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

flood-prone marshes; it was tough on the nostrils too.”<sup>79</sup> The failure of Suydam’s endeavor became a business opportunity for a real estate speculator name, Charles S. Brown. Brown purchased the lots in 1861, built 250 frame houses on them within two years, and called it Brownsville.<sup>80</sup>

Attracting people to this area to live was still a challenge. Fortunately, the overcrowding in Manhattan, especially the lower east side, worked to Brown’s advantage. “Attracted by the relatively low rents and a more healthful relaxed environment, immigrant Jews began to leave the Lower East Side for Brownsville in the late 1880’s. Jewish real estate developers recognize the potential of growing settlements, which at that time was about two hours from New York, and encouraged migration. Among some of the early settlers were several garment contractors and manufacturers who relocated their operations to Brownsville, bringing along not only their families but their workers as well. The neighborhood took shape around the garment workshops, and by the early 1890’s a Jewish population of about 4,000 had arisen.”<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the early history of Brownsville was indeed the history of the Eastern European Jews who migrated to American. As mentioned previously, New Lots was primarily farmland. An ethnic mixture inhabited it: English Settlers, Irish Settlers, Jewish Immigrants and African-Americans.<sup>82</sup> However, the research was unclear as to what became of these settlers and immigrants of New Lots after part of the area was sectioned off into Brownsville. Some of them probably stayed in the area and became a part of its historical development. It is reasonable to conclude that others remained in the early

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<sup>79</sup> The Weekly Nabe, ‘Brownsville and the Curse of Geography,’ June 15, 2012, <http://theweeklynabe.com> (accessed December 1, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Soyer, Brownstones and Brownsville: “Elite Philanthropists and Immigrant Constituents at the Hebrew Educational Society of Brooklyn,” *American Jewish History*, vol. 88. no. 2 (June 2000): 184. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23886258>.

<sup>82</sup> Pritchett, 11.

Brownsville development. The research did account for a small community of Blacks living in Brownsville in the 1920's.<sup>83</sup>

Despite many challenges, the Jewish community increased in Brownsville. It was a slow, steady growth until 1903, when the Williamsburg Bridge was built.

Improved transportation links to Manhattan allowed many more garment workers and others to make their homes in Brownsville even as they continue to work in New York. The opening of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903, the Manhattan Bridge in 1909, the first direct subway line between the two boroughs spurred the growth of the outlying areas of Brooklyn. The construction of the Delancey Street approach to the Williamsburg Bridge also displaced 10,000 people, sending them in search of new places to live. By 1910, an observer could note the transformation of what had been swampy wasteland a decade earlier into "rows miles long of four and five story modern pressed brick tenement brick houses."<sup>84</sup>

A period of rapid growth in Brownsville occurred in the early 1900's when the population increased from 24,000 to 145,000 inhabitants in about twelve years.<sup>85</sup> The literature reports that the community was encountering a series of problems. Some of them bore striking similarities to the current day problems. This was conclusively a lower class socioeconomic community. Pritchett described it well.

Despite the neighborhoods dramatic growth at the beginning of the twentieth century, the cities better classes looked upon the area as a backwater, inhabited by ignorant, dirty people. ...Public and private elites frequently neglected the neighborhood when allocating scarce resources. Brownsville thus suffered from a lack of recreational and educational facilities, and social services were inadequate for the population. Brownsville citizens struggled to maintain adequate sanitation standards,

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<sup>83</sup> Pritchett, 40.

<sup>84</sup> Daniel Soyer, Brownstones and Brownsville: "Elite Philanthropists and Immigrant Constituents at the Hebrew Educational Society of Brooklyn," *American Jewish History*, vol. 88. no. 2. (June 2000): 184. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23886258>.

<sup>85</sup> Edna Ishayik, "A Brownsville Sanctuary, 100 Years and Counting" *nytimes.com*, 18 April 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1iy5prS>.

and health and crime indices were constantly among the worst in the city.<sup>86</sup>

Compared to the Jewish population in Williamsburg and the Lower East Side, the community in Brownsville was poverty stricken.<sup>87</sup> Politically, the Brownsville Community was active in party politics in the early years. One writer places prominent socialist activities in the mainstream of political activity. “There was a forum, “Brownsville Labor Lyceum,” that was known for hosting speakers, including but not limited to Norman Thomas and A. Phillip Randolph.”<sup>88</sup> People who participated benefitted socially, politically, and educationally. The Socialist Party had hegemony in the local politics and was a threat to opposing parties. There was an incident when, the first Jewish Democratic leader, Hymie Schorenstein, orchestrated a raid of the Brownsville Labor Lyceum that led to the arrest of several members of the Socialist Party.<sup>89</sup> This certainly did not help to improve any bi-partisan relations between the two groups.

Alfred Kazin, a Jewish writer, who grew up in Brownsville, reflected on his childhood years in two of his books, *A Walker in the City* and *Starting Out In The Thirties*. Kazin and his family identified with the ideals of the Social Democratic Party. In his memoirs, he shares with readers that, “he and his family fought feverishly against

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<sup>86</sup> Pritchett, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Soyer, 185.

<sup>88</sup> Max Page, review of *Empire on the Hudson: Entrepreneurial Vision and Political Power at the Port Of New York Authority* by James W. Doig, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 107. no 5 (December 2002):1590. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/532935> (accessed January 7, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

the Communists on Pitkin Avenue in Brownsville.<sup>90</sup> This implies a deep level of solidarity and political consciousness.

Within the history of the community, you will find a collective spirit that was unrestrained about taking to the streets to bring attention to their cause “In 1937, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was successful in organizing the laundry industry in New York City as a result of a strike. One thousand laundry workers participated in this action which yielded a contract and higher wages for the workers.”<sup>91</sup>

Other collective actions in the form of strikes and/or public protests that galvanized the people and fortified leadership were: the workers of Beth-El Hospital, in 1962; the rent strikes by the Brooklyn Tenants League and the Brooklyn Tenants Union during World War 1 and the Ocean Hill, Brownsville Teacher’s Strike of 1968.<sup>92</sup>

Some native young activists such as Paul Chandler utilized their skills and passion in the struggle for tenants’ rights. As a member of Christian and Jews United For Social Action (CUSA), young Paul Chandler and others organized and mobilized tenants against slumlords. The group also used other nonviolent protest tactics, including sit-ins at local government offices, to pressure officials to respond to tenants’ complaints.<sup>93</sup>

The one thing that Pritchett and other writers underscored was the ongoing struggle for quality and affordable housing in the Brownsville Community. Soyer

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<sup>90</sup> Alfred Kazin, *A Walker In The City* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951) 10-11.

<sup>91</sup> Carl W. Reed Jr. and Marion Raymenton Robbins, “Wage Chronology No. 33: New York Cities Laundries,” 1945-53, *Monthly Labor Review*, vol.76, no. 1 (January 1953):39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41833002> (accessed January 7, 2015).

<sup>92</sup> Pritchett, 37.

<sup>93</sup> Pritchett, 212.

regarded the conditions under which the early Brownsville immigrants lived as substandard and deplorable.<sup>94</sup> The Brooklyn Eagle reported that the condition of housing was so appalling in the 1890's that people who were walking at night "frequently fell into open cellars".<sup>95</sup> The response to the community's demands for equality in housing brought a massive public housing plan.

In the 1940's, as builder, Robert Moses went about the business of slum cleaning, he planned for Brownsville specifically to house great numbers of the displaced, and for the projects erected there to be for African Americans. The ghetto arose in many instances not merely as a consequence of white attrition, but as a result of mindful orchestration. Moses presumably reasoned that Brownsville's Jews would be less likely to cause upheaval over an influx of Blacks than the Italians of Bushwick or Greenpoint. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia agreed that the projects were situated in areas where there is not the slightest possibility of rehabilitation through private enterprise.<sup>96</sup>

### **New Demographics Old Problems**

The influx of poor people of color set into motion the flight of White people from Brownsville. By the 1960's, the ethnic makeup of Brownsville had changed considerably. In 1910, two-thirds of Brownsville residents were first-generation immigrants, and 85 percent of these immigrants were from Russia.<sup>97</sup> By 1962, only 80,000 people lived in Brownsville, and more than 75 percent of these residents were Black or Puerto Rican.<sup>98</sup> By 1970, there was a significant changed in the demographics

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<sup>94</sup> Soyer, 185.

<sup>95</sup> Pritchett, 13.

<sup>96</sup> Ginia Bellafante, "Resurrecting Brownsville", thenation.com, 17 April 2013, <http://www.thenation.com> (accessed November 22, 2014).

<sup>97</sup> Weddell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago & London, The University Of Chicago Press, 2002), 14-15.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 149.



of Brownsville; now only 4 percent of the population was White.<sup>99</sup> By this time, construction of public housing developments had expanded, the Moses plan was in full effect. Brownsville led the nation in public housing developments.

If Robert Moses' theory was correct, there should have been an amicable existence among the new ethnic mixture: African-Americans, Jews and Latinos. This proved not to be true according to Pritchett. The Black population of Brownsville rose from 235 in 1920 to about 21,000 in 2014.<sup>100</sup> This concentration of public housing brought in more affordable housing but intensified the complexity of other problems in the neighborhoods.

When we conducted the focus groups, interviews, and community engagement questionnaires during the work of this demonstration project, a significant number of people rated Brownsville as a community offering nothing for its residents. Some respondents felt that the community has experienced a decline over the years. Affordable housing was cited as an advantage. However, other community residents indicted New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) as a poor manager and administrator of municipal housing.

A resident Esmeralda Miller had a partially collapsed ceiling; brown water stains marred all her walls. She had been unsuccessful at getting NYCHA to repair any of it, even though she had been calling for months. 'If you put in something for now – if something is broken, or you need a paint job – you call now, in 2013, and they tell you 2016' said Rose Sicard. The backlog on repairs at NYCHA is, in fact, legendarily long, although recently the agency has begun to make inroads. Mable Spencher who lives in the Tilden Housing in Brownsville since 1997 got a cat to deal with her problem of mice that were aggressively entering through the walls of her

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Pritchett, 40.

apartment. At one point, the leaks in her bathroom ceiling had become so severe that she had to sit on the toilet with an umbrella. That went on for a few months, until she went to court and got NYCHA to address the problem.<sup>101</sup>

These residents are trapped. They have few options that would bring about better living conditions outside of their community. Most of them are financially strapped. This limits them from establishing and maintaining relationships outside of the community. Earlier we discussed how the lack of mass transportation isolated the early Brownsville Community from the larger New York Community. Nowadays, mass transportation has improved. Brownsville is now well connected to the rest of the city by mass transportation; therefore, this was not the problem. The problem is street violence, poverty, lack of awareness, and other social maladies that constrict the people to their homes or developments.

Literary critic and writer Alfred Kazin described this sense of isolation and despair in his memoir, *A Walker in the City*. Regarding Brownsville, he writes, “success is measured by one’s ability to get away from it.”<sup>102</sup> Kazin characterizes Brownsville as a place that restricted one’s freedom to move, grow, and connect with the outside world.

It is a prison at the end of the world, the city’s back door, a place of rubbish, filth and emptiness. It was the ‘margin of the city, the last place.’ ... filled with monument works’ where they cut and stored tombstone’ ... nearer the ocean...but our front on the ocean was Canarsie – in those days the great refuse dump ... was the place where they opened the sluice gates to let the city’s muck out into the ocean floor.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ginia Bellafante, “Resurrecting Brownsville”, thenation.com, 17 April 2013, <http://www.thenation.com> (accessed November 22, 2014).

<sup>102</sup> Wendell E. Pritchett, “Identity, Politics, Past, and Present” *International Labor and Working Class History*. 67, (Spring, 2005):36, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27672981>(accessed December 27, 2015).

<sup>103</sup> Alfred Kazin, *A Walker In The City* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951) 10-11.

It is interesting that as Kazin reflects on his childhood in Brownsville, he thinks of it as a prison like environment. His words paint the horrid picture of an unappealing place of blight where one feels closed in. The goal is to get out one day. Kazin's feelings are strikingly similar to a good number of people living in the community nowadays. They share that there is nothing for them, and they have no access to a pathway out.

### **Public Housing and Social Isolation**

There is an extensive body of research that addresses itself to the issue that Kazin describes in his memoir. It is the issue of social isolation. Public housing in inner city neighborhoods disconnects people from other people, and from their families. One writer argued that, "urban neighborhoods with large concentration of poor people are places where relatively few people are connected to the mainstream societal institutions that cultivates networks: employment, education, church, culture government."<sup>104</sup> Griffiths and Tita concur with Tigges, Brown & Greene. They describe the environment of one living in public housing as being restrictive due to what they called a small "awareness space" and "personal activity space."<sup>105</sup>

The awareness space would be those people, place, and things within the person's interactive environment. When someone interacts with people, organizations and institutions outside of his/her neighborhood, his/her awareness space is expanded beyond his/her immediate neighborhood. The individual's activity space is fairly broad. On the other hand, people who live in public housing tend to have a smaller awareness space and

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<sup>104</sup> Leann M. Tigges, Irene Browne, and Gray P. Greene, "Social Isolation of the Urban Poor: Race, Class, and Neighborhood Effects on Social Resources, *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 39. No 1 (Winter, 1998): 56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121011>(accessed December 01, 2015).

<sup>105</sup> Elizabeth Griffiths & George Tita, Leann M. Tigges "Homicide In and Around Public Housing: Is Public Housing a Hotbed, a Magnet, or a Generator of Violence for the Surrounding Community?" *Social Problems*, vol. 56. no. 3 (August 2009): 475. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/sp.2009.56.3.474> (accessed November 17, 2014).

activity space because they have a tendency to operate within the confines of the development.<sup>106</sup>

This is illustrated in a community on the south side of Chicago. The community's social conditions are similar to that of Brownsville. The city has created some initiatives to help address the problem of violence in the community. Journalist, Trymaine Lee, interviewed some young people. The majority of them shared that they were unaware of any special services to help them work through their violence-related issues.<sup>107</sup> It appears that the social isolation severs the information networks flowing into these communities.

Additionally, high crime within public housing developments including NYCHA has altered the movement of many residents, especially young people. This researcher learned through community engagement activities that many people in Brownsville, generally do not venture onto the grounds of other developments. In other words, if they live in the Howard Development, they will not go over to the Van Dyke Development that is only a few blocks away. There are lines drawn in the sand over turf issues, unresolved conflicts, and generational feuds. These limitations erect barriers that one dares not cross or cross at their own risk. In such a case, the people's personal activity space has been reduced to the safest space right around him/her. Some parents shared that their children barely go outside. Some parents who have lost children barely go outside except to attend to business and personal essentials. This limitation of full community access and privileges is another manner in which social isolation is reinforced.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Trymaine Lee, Trauma in the trenches of gun-weary Chicago, [www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com) (accessed 8/8/14).

The policies of public housing authorities such as New York City Housing Authorities (NYCHA) do little to break this pathology. Our community probe disclosed that there are far too many young people and ex-offenders who are unofficially “camping out with relatives” for indefinite periods of time. These relatives fear being evicted due to NYCHA’S rental policy.

Families are not permitted to have anyone live with them that are not on the lease. Individuals that have been arrested, have an open criminal case or a criminal record, indulge in drugs and/or other prohibitive behaviors, on or off NYCHA’s property are labeled as “risks”. Such individuals and the residents of the entire apartment are in jeopardy of being evicted.<sup>108</sup>

Compassionate loved ones take risks and bring uncertified family members and acquaintances into their homes. One young focus group participant remarked, “anybody will let you stay with them, but they will not put you on their lease. You are lost if you are not on a lease. You might as well be homeless.” The majority of these young people are considered high risk by NYCHA’s policies and cannot officially take advantage of any work, educational, social, cultural programs endorsed by the agency. Disconnected, disengaged young people with few options may eventually turn to activities in the street. Some of these activities may include street violence.

John F. Bauman and Norman P. Hummon did a study on the issue of public housing, isolation, and the underclass. Their target population was Black families living in the Richard Allen Homes in Philadelphia. They investigated federal public housing and urban renewal and their contribution to social isolation and the underclass. They concluded that the manner of Federal policy administration unintentionally diverted poor Black families into impoverished urban areas. As a result, it created these conditions of

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<sup>108</sup> The Bronx Public Defenders, “The Consequences of Criminal Charges: A People’s Guide, last update November 2013, <http://www.bronxdefenders.org/housing-and-arrests-or-criminal-convictions/#sthash.SrBaWpl8.dpuf>” (accessed, January 27, 2015).

concentrated poverty that “intensified the social isolation of the city.”<sup>109</sup> They further stated “this practice left residents unable to include kin within the project household, or to use their residences for enterprising purposes, public policy impeded the adaptive strategies that had historically facilitated survival in the depriving world of the inner city.”<sup>110</sup>

Bauman and Hummon stated that the negative impact on the Black families was unintentional. I am not fully convinced of this. There has been a great deal of attention given to the issue of public housing and the inequities of race and class in past years. It definitely has raised our consciousness and awareness about the conditions surrounding them. How could regulating agencies not be aware of the public concerns pertaining to disparaging inequities that exist between race and class? The population of residents in New York public housing is predominantly people of color.

In the mid-1950s, most New York public-housing tenants were white, today they are only 5 percent white, as the decampment of middle-class families to segregated suburbs has been completed. The public and media stereotype of project residents has become one of entrenched poverty and social dysfunction. By 1973, President Richard Nixon could describe such projects as “monstrous, depressing places-rundown, overcrowded, crime-ridden.”<sup>111</sup>

Despite the many problems, New York appears not to be ready to make dramatic changes in its public housing authority. New York State is in the position to influence

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<sup>109</sup> John F. Bauman and Norman P. Hummon, “Public Housing, Isolation, and the Urban Underclass,” *Abstract, Journal Of Urban History*, 17, no.3 (1991) EBSCOhost (accessed November 17, 2014).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Rothstein, “Public Housing: Government-Sponsored Segregation.” Prospect.org, 11 Oct. 2012, <http://prospect.org/article/public-housing-government-sponsored-segregation>.

others because it leads the country in the public housing market.<sup>112</sup> Public housing accounts for 10% of resident housing in America.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, the residents in these public housing developments are left to fend for themselves.

Some places like Chicago have considered the conditions of crime, social isolation, and concentrated poverty, and made public policy changes. It's actually due to the result of a 1976 lawsuit; the Supreme Court ruled that substandard living conditions in certain public housing developments in Chicago violated the Fifth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act. In compensation, households were given the option of using Section 8 vouchers to obtain rental housing in the private market. Subsequently, Chicago came up with a program to demolish its public housing developments. Their voucher program allowed public housing residents to obtain housing in the private market. Research found that by spreading recipients of housing aid throughout the city, overall levels of violent crime were lowered.<sup>114</sup>

### **Public Housing and Crime**

Since I lived in Brownsville in the 1970's, the issue of crime in Brownsville was a concern. The research shows that crime was always an issue in that community. It has been a social problem in the United States since the 1800's and in Brownsville as early as the 1900's. In the 1910's through the 20's, organized crime was used to stifle the rise in the birth of unions.<sup>115</sup> As time went on, the criminal activities expanded to include but was not limited to prostitution, narcotics, loan-sharking, and bootlegging.<sup>116</sup> Gangs were

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<sup>112</sup> Nicholas Dagen. Bloom 2012. "Learning from New York: America's Alternative High-rise Public Housing Model." *Journal Of The American Planning Association* 78, no. 4(2012): 418. *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 19, 2015).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Daniel Hartley, Public Housing, Concentrated Poverty, and Crime, *Economic Commentary*, No. 2014-19, (October 6, 2014).1 <http://www.clevelandfed.org/research>. (accessed November 10, 2014).

<sup>115</sup> Pritchett, 44.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

a problem back then. There is still a gang problem in Brownsville. Many residents believe that their activities are more indiscriminate and destructive than in earlier years.

One writer shared that the 30's and the 40's were prime time for organized crime in Brownsville.

The Bowery Boys were precursors to the Brownsville Gang, who would later become Murder Inc. There were mythical gangsters used to evoke fear into the hearts of other gangsters. In the 20's and 30's, organized crime was at its climax. This was due to the fact that America was in need because of the Depression and Prohibition was at its height. These circumstances especially benefited crime, being that people were looking for an easy way out of the Depression and some booze.<sup>117</sup>

Gangs and crime have been a part of the social fabric of the community for decades

The difference is that in the previous generation, many neighborhoods were buffered from the worst of the violence because they were geographically protected by ruling neighborhood gang. Nowadays, there are enemies seemingly around every corner as the old gangs have mostly dissolved into smaller factions and cliques led by immature, angry impulsive youngsters with easy access to firepower.<sup>118</sup>

We might say that the gangs were socialized differently in previous years. From talking to people in the community, it became apparent that a distinction should be made between gangs and young people in the community who have organized for positive efforts.

Brownsville's past and present have influenced people's perceptions about the community and its people. Young people in Brownsville feel safer if they are connected

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<sup>117</sup> Michael Sugarman, "Murder Inc: Jewish Gangsters In America" *IL Peretz Community Jewish School*, entry posted May 2003, [http://www.ilperetz.org/graduates/michael\\_sugarman.htm](http://www.ilperetz.org/graduates/michael_sugarman.htm).

<sup>118</sup> Trymaine Lee, Trauma in the trenches of gun-weary Chicago, [www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com) (accessed 8/8/14).



to a social or cultural network in the community. Our research revealed that there is an insufficient amount of viable social networks for the young adults in the community. Those that do exist are not strategically located to serve the youth of all housing developments. This leaves many of them socially disconnected. This vacuum leads many young people to seek identity and validation in street gangs.

On the other hand, there are groups of young people in Brownsville that have organized to advance the cause of goodness within the community. They are pushing hard against the currents of history, stigma, social isolation, crime, and poverty. These young people are simply seeking positive outlets and engagements. They desire the same things that other youngsters of their peer group in other community desire. One day I was engaged in conversation with a group of community youngsters from the Howard Development about organizing a team for basketball competitions. They were energetic and excited about it. Their discussion was free flowing and engaging until the topic of team identity came up. Things slowed down. They were hit with the reality that many of the colors that they wanted to select for the team's colors were associated with a gang in the neighborhood. This narrowed their choices dramatically. This is one example of the ways in which these young people must live with restricted freedom of choice due to social sanctions.

### **The Effects of Trauma on Children**

What then is the long-term impact of street violence on the lives of the children in Brownsville? A look at the related research indicates that untreated trauma do have an adverse impact on the lives of children. The research describes quite a number of

conditions and behaviors that show up in children who have been exposed to street violence.

Anna Aizer, examine some of these conditions in her research paper entitled, *Neighborhood Violence and Urban Youth*. Her work investigated causal relationships among community violence, children, and conditions of disadvantage: poverty, unemployment, and education. Aizer takes the position that it may be unrealistic to look at community violence and its impact on children unless one considers the children's condition(s) of disadvantage. She makes a reasonable argument that neighborhood violence is often correlated with high rates of domestic violence and other types of disadvantage (racial, income and parent education) which in turn have been shown to have deleterious effects on a child outcomes.<sup>119</sup> "Therefore any research documenting a relationship between neighborhood violence and poor children outcomes may overstate the causal relationship."<sup>120</sup> She suggested that readers are advised to consider other factors of disadvantage conditions as they look critically at street violence and its' impact on children.

Aizer's did conclude that street violence does affect children. However, when the factor of disadvantaged social circumstances is accounted for, it changes the results. She shared that a control factor was accounted for in the research. When that took place, it changed some of the outcomes. The conclusion was, "underlying disadvantage does explain some of the negative outcomes observed, but not all."<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Anna Aizer, "Neighborhood Violence And Urban Youth," National Bureau Of Economic Research, February 2008, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w13773> (accessed 11/17/2014).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 30.

These findings were supported by Marie-Claude Jipguep and Kathy Sanders-Phillips in a journal article on, *The Context of Violence for Children Of Color: Violence in the Community and in the Media*. “In the United States, the ethnic group most effected by violence is the one most affected by poverty.”<sup>122</sup> “African-American youth are the ethnic group most exposed to violence, followed by Hispanic Americans, and Whites.”<sup>123</sup>

James Garbarino et al. investigated the status of gun violence, and it’s impact on children. They presented a review of research on the psychological effects of gun violence research and presented some significant findings. One of their summary points indicated that exposure to gun violence in children may result in signs and symptoms of anger, withdrawal, posttraumatic stress, and desensitization to violence.<sup>124</sup> Outcomes such as anger and withdrawal were identified by most of the relevant articles. The idea that exposure to gun violence desensitizes the child to violence is a key point. It implies that this leads to a cycle of violence. In fact, the research did more than infer. There were strong implications that not only does it desensitize the youth, but it is also a great predictor that the youth will resort to violence as a way to resolve conflicts.<sup>125</sup>

Another key outcome that Garbarino et al. touched upon was the impact of street violence on academic performance. It stands to reason that children who have suffered

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<sup>122</sup> Marie-Claude Jipguep and Kathy Sanders –Phillips, “The Context of Violence for Children of Color: Violence in the Community and in the Media,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 72, no. 4 (Autumn, 2003): 380. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3211190> (accessed 12/18/14).

<sup>123</sup> T.L Kuther et al., “Community violence and sociomoral development: An African American Cultural Perspective. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 73. no. 4 (2003):177-189 (accessed 12/18/14).

<sup>124</sup> James Garbarino, Catherine P. Bradshaw and Joseph A. Vorrasi, “Mitigating the Effects of Gun Violence on Children and Youth”, *The Future Of Children*, vol.12. no. 2. (Summer-Autumn 2002): 73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1602739> (accessed 12/18/14).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 74.

from trauma may have problems retaining, focusing, comprehending, etc. In such cases, children generally do not perform at their optimum due to distractions. My experience in working with children in the public education sector corroborated this finding. Children who have suffered from trauma often lag academically and tend to be in need of psychological and academic intervention. In the classroom setting, they may appear quiet and withdrawn, or overactive and distractive. Garbarino et al. stated that exposure to gun violence compromises children academic performance and suppresses their interest in learning overall.<sup>126</sup> “Trauma affects the brain activity.”<sup>127</sup> It may also affect children’s general information processing. “For example, children who have experienced trauma may misinterpret ambiguous stimuli as threatening.”<sup>128</sup> Guterman and Cameron concur with these finding in their research. They pointed to the likely outcome of the impact that trauma has on the cognitive functions which may interfere with focus and concentration.<sup>129</sup>

The research also draws a correlation between exposure to community violence and children’s views of the future and the world. Simply stated, these children are not optimistic about their future, their place in the world or their community. “It affects children’s views of the world and of themselves, their ideas about the meaning and purpose of life, their expectation for future happiness, and their moral development.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Garbarino et al.,76.

<sup>129</sup> Neil B. Guterman and Mark Cameron, “Assessing the Impact of Community Violence on Children and Youth,” *Social Work* Vol. 42 No. 5 (1997): 498, *Academic Search Premier EBSCOhost* (accessed November 17, 2014).

<sup>130</sup> Jipguep and Sanders-Phillips, 381.

The story of the late James Darby from New Orleans is an excellent illustration. James Darby, 9-year-old was very concerned about the gun violence in his neighborhood. His concerns motivated him to write a letter to Former President Bill Clinton, pleading with him to do something about the violence in his neighborhood. In his handwritten letter, the young, third-grade student expressed his profound fears about the community violence that threatened his life on a daily basis.

“I want you to stop the killing in the city. I think that someone might kill me. I am asking you nicely to stop it. I know you can do it.”<sup>131</sup>

James Darby wrote the letter on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1994. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, Mother’s Day, he was shot to death while he was walking with his mother. James had a prophetic notion about his life. The conditions under which the young 9-year-old lived left him void of hope for the future. He reached out to someone, The President, whom he believed had the power to do something about the situation.

President Clinton wrote to James’ classmates after his death. He expressed his sadness about what happened to James. Then he moved on to talk about all of the other priorities that he had as President.<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately, children do look up to parents, teachers, preachers, elders and adults in positions of influence and/or power to help them when they are in trouble. In some communities, it is a matter of life and death. James Darby’s classmates and community are left to grapple with their bleak realities. James is now a statistic or a case study. However, he was somebody’s child, somebody’s classmate, somebody’s sibling, and our future.

The research indicates that many children like James Darby live an existence where they are constantly at war without a viable defense. Along with the anger,

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<sup>131</sup> Craig R. Sautter, “Standing up to violence.” *Phi Delta Kappa*, Vol. 76, No 5: K1 (1995): 1 Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed November 17, 2014).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

depression, psychotic numbing, damaged, sense of morality, detachment, feelings of insecurity, they generally development symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.<sup>133</sup>

A recent study by Chicago's Cook County Hospital, a level-1 trauma center that treats many of the city's shooting victims, found that 40% of patients showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The wounded by gunfire were about 13 times as likely as others to suffer symptoms of PTSD, which include anxiety, isolation, anger and sleeplessness. But studies show it's not just those who are physically wounded who suffer. People continuously exposed in any way to violence can experience debilitating social and cognitive impacts. Such exposure can actually alter and rewire a person's brain. That means many residents of the most gun-weary neighborhoods remain in a perpetual state of fight or flight, with the sections of the brain that control the release of stress hormones on overdrive. The symptoms can be more pronounced in children and young people whose brains are still developing.<sup>134</sup>

Garbarino et al. made an assertion in connection to this. They noted that the psychological profile of children living in the conditions of perpetual violence exhibit behaviors similar to that of young survivors of war.<sup>135</sup>

In consideration, of the scope, depth and impact of community violence, it has to be regarded as a public health issue. We must do something about it. We must not forget the classmates of James Darby and the children in the community where Zurana gave her life saving children. We must provide an outlet for healing for those children and families in Brownsville who are left nurturing the memories of their loved ones killed by senseless street violence.

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<sup>133</sup> James Garbarino et al., 75.

<sup>134</sup> Trymaine Lee, Trauma in the trenches of gun-weary Chicago, [www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com) (accessed 8/8/14).

<sup>135</sup> James Garbarino, et al., "Children in Dangerous Environment: Coping with the consequences of community violence." (San Francisco: Jossey- Bass, 1992), *Social Work* vol. 42 no. 5 (1997): 498, *Academic Search Premier EBSCOhost* (accessed November 17, 2014).

## CHAPTER 4

### THEOLOGICAL VISION STATEMENT

#### Responding to Conditions on the Ground

##### Luke 7:11-17

**11** Soon afterward he went to a city called Na'in, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. **12** As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. **13** And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." **14** And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." **15** And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. **16** Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" **17** And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> (Luke 7:11-17 NRSV).

Income and economic sustainability are issues for many families in the Brownsville Community. According to the Center For Court Innovations, the annual median income for a family in Brownsville is \$26, 802, which equates to about one-third of the families living below the poverty line.<sup>137</sup> It is indeed a struggling community. But, should society turn it's back on Brownsville?

Is there a Biblical mandate regarding Brownsville and other poor communities? Would Jesus go to Brownsville and minister to the people's needs? Based on its' reputation for street violence, would Jesus go out of his way to avoid Zurana's Community?

In Luke 7:11-17 Jesus showed up for a widow and restored life to her son. Two of the three-resurrection account by Jesus in the Bible is children.<sup>138</sup> One is the young unnamed man in Luke 7:11. Another is the little daughter of Jarius. The third is Lazarus of Bethany.<sup>139</sup>

The town Nain, in Luke 7 was located on a steep hill and was a small, poor village.<sup>140</sup> **Naïv** translates into pasture. It is also referred to as a pleasant or a lovely place. It was probably not a popular place and required much physical effort to travel uphill to get there.<sup>141</sup> Barnes Commentary places Nain in the boundaries of the tribe of Issachar; it

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<sup>137</sup> Suvi Hynynen, *Community Perceptions of Brownsville, A Survey of Neighborhood Quality of Life Safety and Services* (new York: Center For Court Innovations 2011), 1. <http://www.courtinnovation.org> (accessed 12/13/14).

<sup>138</sup> Pulpit Commentary, 7:11 Luke, Bibleencyclopedia.com (accessed 1/23/14).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



was one of the cities of Galilee, about two miles south of Mount Tabor, about twenty miles from Capernaum.<sup>142</sup>

The name Nein (Nain) is still given to a small poor village on the same site. It is approached by a narrow, steep ascent, and on either side of the road are sepulchral caves. It was in one of these that the dead man was about to have been laid when the Master met the mourning procession winding down the steep road as he and his crowd of followers were toiling up the ascent nearing the gate of the city.<sup>143</sup>

Nain may have received its place in Biblical history from the miracle of the resurrection that Jesus performed in Luke: 7:14-15. If it were not for this event, it could possibly have remained in Biblical obscurity.

Prior to this scriptural text in Luke 7:1-10, accounts of writers state that Jesus entered Capernaum and healed a centurion's slave. It is reasonable to conclude that this centurion was a person of influence and power. He had a slave under his authority. He also had friends in the community who loved him. He was probably considered a religiously devout man. The elders revered him for building the synagogue. Therefore, they did not hesitate to relate his request to Jesus.<sup>144</sup>

He told Jesus that he was a superior with soldiers under his command and that he was also under the authority of others.

This explains the reason why he made the request. He was but a subordinate himself, "under authority" of his Chiliarch and other officers, and yet he had soldiers under him as well as a servant, who at a word

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<sup>142</sup> Albert Barnes, Notes On The Bible, [1834].  
Text Courtesy of [Internet Sacred Texts Archive](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/luke/7.htm). <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/luke/7.htm> (accessed 1/24/2015).

<sup>143</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database,  
<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/luke/7.htm> (accessed 1/14/15).

<sup>144</sup> Benson Commentary On The Old And New Testament,  
<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/luke/7.htm> (accessed January 24, 2015).

executed his orders. He inferred that Jesus, who had the power of healing at a distance, had at His command thousands of the Heavenly Army who would respond to his commands at His bidding speed.<sup>145</sup>

The centurion and the widow lived in different communities some miles apart. There were notable differences other than geography. Presumably, their social, and economic statuses were different. Unlike the centurion, the widow was the property of the state. Jesus blessed the influential, and then he traveled to Nain to bless the poor. This is consistent with his social justice ministry of advocacy for the poor. He also included them.

When Jesus, his disciples, and a great crowd of people reached Nain, they saw a funeral procession at the gates of the city. The procession was about to exit the city when they converged with the incoming crowd at the gates. Scriptures describe the procession as a widow who was going to bury her only son. In comparison to Denise Peace (Zurana's mother), the widow was performing the duty of a parent. She marched in the funeral procession as her child was taken to his final resting place. There were people from the village with her on this day of mourning. She was undoubtedly broken hearted. This may have been the darkest day of her life. She may have had a conversation with God during this time of adversity. Whether or not she made the request, Jesus showed up for her and blessed her in a way that she probably could not have imagined.

It is a powerfully reassuring act of love and compassion. Could this nameless mother have been on Jesus' mind while he was in Capernaum? If so, it surely is good to know that in our times of need, Jesus is thinking about us. Now that her only son was gone, the widow would have to endure many social, cultural and economic challenges.

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<sup>145</sup> The Cambridge Bible For Schools And Colleges, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/luke/7.htm> (accessed January 24, 2015).

“The loss of her only son means that there is nothing in her future except a life of destitute poverty and misery.”<sup>146</sup> Her worth is tied to her male child. “The fact that this youth was the only son of his mother, she a widow would convey to Jewish notions a deeper sorrow than it even does to ours, for they regarded childlessness as a special calamity, and the loss of offspring as a direct punishment for sin.”<sup>147</sup> This exemplified a triple jeopardy condition for the widow. She was poor, female, and childless.

The economic loss for the widow was undoubtedly considerable. The manner of the son’s burial suggests an age category.

With some exceptions, the Jews did not bury the deceased (children) within the city. The age of the dead child determined the manner of the ceremonial procession. A dead child under a month old would be carried in the bosom of someone and buried by two men and one woman. Men and women attended to the burial of children under one-year-old. These children were carried in a small coffin in the arms of someone attending the funeral. Any child between the ages of one to three years was carried in a coffin on someone’s shoulder. Deceased children over three-years-old were laid on a bier or a bed and taken to the tomb outside of the village. All of those attending the funeral that knew the deceased would be in the procession and accompany the deceased to the tomb.<sup>148</sup>

We cannot be absolutely sure of the son’s age. The burial customs suggest that he was at least three years of age. His body was being carried on a bier to the tombs.

Scripture describes him as monogenēs (μονογενής). This carries the significance of being her only “begotten son.”<sup>149</sup> It also carries the meaning of “unique.”<sup>150</sup> Monogenēs also

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<sup>146</sup> Guzik Bible Commentary, (2006), <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/luke/7.htm> (accessed January 24, 2015).

<sup>147</sup> The Cambridge Bible For Schools And Colleges, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/luke/7.htm> (accessed January 24, 2015).

<sup>148</sup> John Gill, Exposition of the Entire Bible [1746-63], [Internet Sacred Texts Archive. http://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/luke/7.htm](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/luke/7.htm) (accessed January 27, 2015).

<sup>149</sup> John 1:18, Text Analysis, Additional Parallel Greek (<http://biblehub.com/text/john/1-18.htm>) (accessed January 27, 2015).

appears in scriptures like John 1:18: “No one has ever seen God: the only Son, who in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.”<sup>151</sup> This implies an inextricably close and special relationship. The widow’s son had to be close and valuable to her. Since “a large crowd” was with her, he probably was also well loved and respected by others. Research specifies that Jewish custom discouraged anyone from working while a person was being laid to rest.<sup>152</sup> The community’s people had the freedom to participate in the ceremony. Also, it was regarded as an act of mercy and kindness to process behind a dead person.<sup>153</sup> As the widow and the crowd were walking out of the gates of the city, Jesus stopped the funeral procession.

Jesus’ compassion and love for this poor widow is evident. He interceded during the widow’s time of distress. Jane Schaberg stated that among the Gospels, Luke is often regarded as the “Gospel of the poor or The Gospel of Women.”<sup>154</sup> A search of scriptures, shows that Luke is the only Gospel that records this widow’s story. Overall, Luke demonstrates great concern for women and children; they comprise the majority of the poor throughout history.<sup>155</sup> The death of this woman’s son will push her even further into the abyss of poverty. She is facing a state of absolute poverty as described by Ruth Sidel in her book, *Women & Children Last*. Sidel defines absolute poverty as those living

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> (John 1:18 RSV).

<sup>152</sup> John Gill, Exposition of the Entire Bible [1746-63], [Internet Sacred Texts Archive](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/luke/7.htm). <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/luke/7.htm> (accessed January 27, 2015).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, editors. *The Women’s Bible Commentary* (Westminster Knox Press: Louisville Kentucky, 1992), 277.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

below the poverty line without sufficient resources to provide for food clothing and shelter.<sup>156</sup>

The manner in which Jesus stopped the procession had spiritual and cultural relevance. He touched the bier. Customarily, touching the coffin was considered an act of contamination.<sup>157</sup> As a result, people were forbidden to do it. It had to be a powerfully suspenseful moment when the procession was brought to a standstill by Jesus' touch. I am sure all eyes were on Jesus. The pinnacle of that moment was made manifest. An unnamed, widow in Nain was given back her life.

This moment of suspense bears a resemblance to the scriptural text in Luke 8:43-48. It is the account of the woman with the issue of blood who pressed until she touched the hem of Jesus' garment. Jesus stopped, acknowledged the woman's act of faith, and proclaimed her healing. Both of these women were named by their circumstances: "woman with an issue of blood," and "widow who lost her only son." Jesus stopped, affirmed, and healed their afflictions. Jesus returned something to them that sustained their lives.

In Luke chapter 7:15, the word ἔδωκεν translates into an act of giving back or return.<sup>158</sup> In the scriptural text, it reads, "And he gave him to his mother." Once, the son had entered the realm of death, he no longer belonged to the mother.<sup>159</sup> For this reason, Jesus presented the son back to the mother. This was a profound act of compassion that

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<sup>156</sup> Ruth Sidel, *Women & Children Last* (New York, New York: Viking Penguin Inc. 1987), 6.

<sup>157</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/luke/7.htm> (accessed 1/24/15).

<sup>158</sup> Luke 7:15, Text Analysis, Additional Parallel Greek <http://biblehub.com/text/luke/7-15.htm> (accessed January 27, 2015).

<sup>159</sup> Johann Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/luke/7.htm> (accessed 1/24/15).

Jesus showed the widow. Before he restored life to her son, he ministered to her state of grief. He clearly said, “Do not weep.” “It is difficult to tell mothers who are crying, cause children are dying to not weep.”<sup>160</sup> However, we must follow in Jesus’ footsteps.

Brownsville is a community where the needs are great. There are many parents like the widow in Nain. When their bloodline gets cut short due to senseless street violence, not much is in place to attend to the needs of these families. The atrocities will bring people and attention to the family and the community. After the funeral and the marches, they are often left alone to carry the burden of the pain and sorrow. It was evident that Jesus’ desires for us to let such families know, above all else, God cares. Additionally, we must let them know that faith is a sustaining power. It will help to move them from sorrow to a peaceful resolve.

This scripture is a good one to convey to children the love that Jesus has for them. This narrative is about a child in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus used the child’s life to bless his mother. When he ministered to the mother, he said, “Do not weep.” The depth of love and compassion is evident in those three words. They are comforting and prophetic. Jesus was giving the mother back someone that she had lost. The prophetic word was followed by an action. Just as soon as he ministered to the widow, he touched the bier and stopped the source of her sorrow: the physical corpse of her dead son being carried to the grave. Then our Savior gave a command directly to the young man, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”

In communities such as Brownsville, we must first put things in place to minister to the spirits and souls of those young men and women who have given up because they

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<sup>160</sup> Sadie Sanders, interview by author, Brooklyn, New York, June 7, 2014.

believe that their lives do not matter. Jesus spoke to the dead son, “Young man, I say to you, arise!” After Jesus had given the command, he watched the words take on a life form. Then, he connected the son to his kindred, the mother.

It is insufficient to say, “Black Lives Matter,” simply because it is the fashionable slogan of the moment. If it does not come from a place of passion and purpose, it will not transform anything or anyone. It is important to speak the truth with power to penetrate the walls of some hardened, discouraged hearts. Then we can begin to rebuild lives.

There was a recent story about a principal in Brownsville, Nadia Lopez, of Mott Bridges Academy. She speaks her heart with more than words and touches the soul of her students. A roving street blogger met one of Principal Lopez’s students, Vidal Chastanet and asked him who was the person that influenced him the most? Young Vidal said that his principal, Nadia Lopez, influenced him the most.

When we get in trouble, she doesn't suspend us. She calls us to her office and explains to us how society was built down around us. And she tells us that each time somebody fails out of school, a new jail cell gets built. And one time she made every student stand up, one at a time, and she told each one of us that we matter.<sup>161</sup>

The blogger went to the school to meet the principal. The principal was struggling to raise one hundred thousand dollars to send the sixth-grade students to Harvard University to spend a week. After the blogger’s story about Vidal and the school’s fundraising initiative had gone viral, they raised over a million dollars in five days. This is what faith-rooted organizing looks like. As faith-rooted organizers, we must allow faith to be the central dimension of our organizing.

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<sup>161</sup> Melanie Eversley, “Humans of N.Y. blogger raises \$1M plus for students,” [www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/01/30/humans-of-new-york-mott-hall-bridges-harvard/22566817/) 30, January 2015, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/01/30/humans-of-new-york-mott-hall-bridges-harvard/22566817/> (accessed January 31, 2015).

Vidal Chastanet lives in Brownsville, Brooklyn. At his tender age of 13, he may have seen quite a few parents who have made the procession all the way to the grave with their dead children. Many of them have not received the blessing like the widow in Nain. No one helped them to interrupt the cycle of death and dying in their communities. They marched all the way to the grave and returned with a hole in their hearts that was never healed. A healing project is needed in Brownsville to bring purpose out of pain. The church, being the body of Christ, must proclaim God's good news about the resurrection. After the disciples and the mass of people in Nain had seen the prophetic word's commanding power, it had to transform their lives and anchor their faith. Faith changes a person's heart. When transformation takes place in the people's hearts, it will invariably change the community.

### **The Children's Advocate**

There are other scriptural texts that demonstrate Jesus' love for young people. He often lifts them up as examples in his teaching ministry. Scriptures show instances of Jesus advocating for children and using them as models of faith. This scriptural text illustrates one such instance.

**14** And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. **15** But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant; **16** and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise'?"<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> (Matthew 21:14-16 RSV).



The scriptural setting takes place at a time when children “were the lowest on the social ladder, and caring for them was a low-class job.”<sup>163</sup> The religious leaders evidently stood strong in the traditional belief that children were second-class citizens. This did not prevent the children from praising God. They had witnessed Jesus performing miracles in his healing ministry and were outwardly expressing praise. The chief priests and scribes heard them and wanted Jesus to reprimand the children. Perhaps, they were of the opinion that children should only be seen and not heard.

Jesus, a children’s advocate, responded to them by affirming the children, “have you not heard that the babes and sucklings has bought perfect praise?” The translation unlocks the meaning of Jesus’ feelings about these children. He certainly did not rebuke them. The word children (*paidas*) in verse 15 translate into the meaning of, “a boy or girl child.”<sup>164</sup> It also takes on the meaning of a servant of God. In verse 16, the words babes (*nēpiōn*) and suckling (*thēlazontōn*) translate into unlearned infant and “I give suck” or “nursed”.<sup>165</sup> Jesus references scripture: Psalms 8:2, as he is teaching on this occasion. He acknowledges that the children had insight about his true identity. He also supports the children’s right to praise him publicly.

It was not uncustomary for the children to be in the temple. “It was a common thing among the Jews for the children to be employed in public acclamations; and thus they were accustomed to hail their celebrated rabbins. This shouting of the children was therefore no strange thing in the land: only they were exasperated, because a person was celebrated against whom they had a rooted hatred.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Marcia J. Bunge, *The Child In Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company), 43.

<sup>164</sup> The Lockman Foundation, NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries, (1998) <http://biblehub.com/greek/3816.htm> (accessed January 28, 2015).

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

Evidently, this was the motive for the religious leaders indignation. They did not want the children to exalt Jesus. On the other hand, this text illustrates that the spiritually untrained mind of children can discern divine secrets of the knowledge of the true and living God.<sup>167</sup>

Another key scripture that supports this claim is Mark 9:33-37.

**33** And they came to Caper'na-um; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" **34** But they were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. **35** And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." **36** And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, **37** "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."<sup>168</sup>

Once again, Jesus utilizes a child to model the character traits of service and humility. The disciples were arguing about which one of them were the greatest. Jesus gave them a concrete teaching tool to focus on as he illustrates his teaching points. He picked up a child and held the child in his arms. Then he says to the disciples, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." In this scripture, the meaning of the word child (paidion) translates the same as the word in Matthew 21:16. Jesus conveys to the disciples that children are important to God. They are to be cared for and served. He implies that loving and serving those not highly regarded by society (children, women, poor) is the mark of a

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<sup>166</sup> Adam Clarke, Commentary on The Bible [1831], [Internet Sacred Texts Archive. http://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/matthew/21.htm](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/matthew/21.htm) (accessed January 27, 2015).

<sup>167</sup> Bunge, 48.

<sup>168</sup> (Mark 9: 33-37 RSV).

great person. “The humblest service characterizes the greatest. Jesus regards service to children as a mark of greatness.”<sup>169</sup>

Another scripture to examine in this regard is Luke 18:15-17.

**15** Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. **16** But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. **17** Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."<sup>170</sup>

Jesus was blessing the children. The observers were indignant about it. Since children were regarded as second-class citizens, the onlookers probably believed that Jesus was wasting his precious time on them. In response to them, Jesus took the moment to teach about the kingdom of God. He rebuked the onlookers. Children were among the least of these according to society. But, the least of these: poor, suffering, hungry were called “Blessed” by Jesus.<sup>171</sup> The vulnerability and powerlessness of children seemed to be at the center of the covenant community for the kingdom of God.<sup>172</sup>

Jesus admonishes about despising children in Matthew 18:10-14.

**10** "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. **12** What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? **13** And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. **14** So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish”.

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<sup>169</sup> Bunge, 43.

<sup>170</sup> (Luke 18:15-17 RSV).

<sup>171</sup> Bunge, 38.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

In line with the other three scriptures, Jesus sends a strong message regarding the treatment of children. He reprimands against despising (kataphronēsēte) them. In other words, he discouraged disregard or insult toward children. The word in Greek for children is different, mikrōn. The English translation is equivalent to the earlier scriptures. It means younger, little or small. The message that God instructs us to love, serve, and take care of young children is a powerful and meaningful one. These Gospel writers place children at the center of the social interactions and structures. Joyce Ann Mercer describes this as the writer's methods of illustrating the principles of the kingdom of God. She states that in the reign of God, there is a different social order of relationships.<sup>173</sup>

Ancient Palestine was an ancient agrarian society. Socially, children were regarded as a subclass of people without human rights or privileges. It was revolutionary for the Gospel writers to present children as the paradigm of the good news. This meant that the kingdom of God included the poor, peasants, and villagers. This was in direct contrast to society's principals and ideals.<sup>174</sup>

Jesus attended to conditions on the ground as he ministered to the people needs. He was a street preacher attending to the work of ministry in a socially complex society of his day and time. Our society is also complex with a multiplicity of issues. Some of the conditions and issues in communities that Jesus ministered in were similar to the conditions in the Brownsville Community. The children are among the lowest in the least of these. When Jesus put the spotlight on children that surely, afflicted the comfortable.

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<sup>173</sup> Joyce Ann Mercer, *Welcoming Children, A Practical Theology of Childhood*, (St Louis Missouri: Chalice Press, 2005), 51.

<sup>174</sup> Richard A Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in Social Context*, New York: Continuum, 1993), 189.

Jesus' theological position assures that children have a place in the Beloved Community that Dr. King talked about in his vision.

### **The Beloved Community: A Place Where Children Belong**

Nowadays, do children in poor communities around the world have a place in the Beloved Community? Jesus' affinity for children is evident through his teaching ministry. There is open access to the kingdom of God. Children are not barred from entering. The ideals of Dr. King's Beloved Community are similar to the prophetic vision of Jesus' kingdom of God.

The Beloved Community is epitomized as a society where there is equality among all? It is a society of mutual acceptance among races, classes, and gender. The principals of love and justices abide in all matters of human affairs. Everyone has access to power and shares in the decision-making process. It is a society where differences are celebrated and uplifted as the ingenuity of God's greatness.<sup>175</sup>

The concept of The Beloved Community was Dr. King's vision of a society that is inclusive: race, gender, social class, and religion. Charles Marsh explores this thoroughly in his book, *The Beloved Community – How Faith Shapes Social Justice, From The Civil Rights Movement Today*. In one instance, he refers to Dr. King's vision of the Beloved Community as an intersection of the kingdom of God and the American Dream.<sup>176</sup> Dr. King followed in Jesus' footsteps. He challenged our society to examine practices of racism and injustice toward the poor.

The American Dream is an ambiguous concept in America. I believe that the American Dream and the kingdom of God are contradictory, not complimentary. Some

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<sup>175</sup> Baldwin, Lewis V. "The beloved community: how faith shapes social justice, from the civil rights movement to today." *Political Theology* 7, no. 4 (2006) 527-529. Review of Charles Marsh, "*The Beloved Community*". New York: Basic Books, 2005. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 22, 2015).

<sup>176</sup> Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 49.

Americans that have acquired much wealth and status may believe that they have achieved the American Dream. This does not grant them assurance into the kingdom of God. The ideal for success under monopoly capitalism is the acquisition of, wealth, power, capital and influence. Therefore, the American Dream is a socially constructed political ideology.

Others, in the vanishing middle class, or the underclass may feel that the American Dream is far out of reach to them. What are the ideals of the American Dream for the “least of these?” How can the American Dream be achieved when some are denied access due to class, race, or gender? I believe that the American Dream for the oppressed class is a state of being where every human being has equal opportunity to honor God by giving his/her greatest service. It is a place where children are revered and not sacrificed. It represents a society where the ideals of the Beloved Community are exemplified.

## CHAPTER 5

### METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTATION

#### Team Spiritedness

This Doctor of Ministry Project was developed to create a strategic plan for an initiative to support young people between ages 6-17 that reside in Howard Houses Development in Brownsville, and have been impacted by street violence. The ultimate goal is to bring about healing in the lives of children and their families. Transformation is expected to occur when there is collaboration between the community and the researcher as data is collected, interpreted and analyzed.<sup>177</sup> As the action research methods are infused in this initiative, it promises to bring about new knowledge and insights. This project focused primarily on people and ideas as opposed to numbers.<sup>178</sup> Key individuals were interviewed. High-level discussions took place in the focus group sessions. The teams conducted a community engagement questionnaire of 558 people from the Howard Houses Development in Brownsville.

The interrelating work of several teams helped the researcher to accomplish the work of this endeavor. The teams were:

- 1) Site Team.
- 2) Brownsville Voices Community Organizing Team.

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<sup>177</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research, A Multi-Methods approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, Oregon: WIPF & STOCK, 2011), 63.

<sup>178</sup> Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers – For Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan), 162.

- 3) Church of New Beginnings.
- 4) DEUCES (Do You Enlightenment & Cultural Empowerment Services).
- 5) TEARS (Togetherness Encourages Awareness & Righteous Service).
- 6) Community Organizing (MICAHA) Doctor of Ministry Cohort.

The work of the demonstration project spanned a period of eight months, from March 1, 2014 through October 30, 2014. In the proposal, the projected dates were from February 2, 2014 – October 30, 2014. During that period of time, the prolonged period of inclement weather in New York City prevented us from adhering to our projected timeline.

Even though the coordination and implementation of the project's work did not start until March, the site team members and I had been in conversation since my proposal was being developed. They were very resourceful and supportive. We met on a monthly basis starting in March of 2014. During the first couple of meetings, we reviewed the complete proposal and adjusted the timeline. I shared my schedule of appointments for interviews and meetings with the group and asked for the team's feedback. Fortunately, the high level of communication between the team and I enabled one and/or more of the team members to be present and assist with most of the activities. This included but was not limited to taking photos, taking field notes, disseminating & collecting materials, researching, and coordinating the refreshments (see Appendix B).

The Community Organizing (MICAHA) Doctor of Ministry Cohort team was a solid source of collegial and professional support. Individually and collectively, this team helped in more ways than I could have imagined initially. Our monthly conference calls were motivating and inspiring. The exchange of information during the calls and at other



times was tremendously resourceful and valuable to the process. We talked about anything ranging from personal life's challenges to specifics about our demonstration project. It was extremely beneficial when we organized a work retreat in Atlanta, Georgia in January of 2014 to support each other with the final stages of writing our proposals (see Appendix C). In this close knitted community of shared decision-making, love, support and respect, the support far exceeded my expectations. I accumulated knowledge and had access to a context for exercising the principles of collective work and responsibility. This experience influenced the practices, encouraged the participation, and inspired the spiritedness of teamwork throughout the demonstration project.

My church community supported me with their prayers, presence, and resourceful assistance. Two of them were also members of the site team. Most members enthusiastically participated in some of the demonstration project activities. As a result, we benefitted from the convenience of having intricate communication and coordination between the church and the project.

### **Research Design**

While writing the proposal, I projected that I would work with the Brownsville, Residents, Activists, Community, Clergy and Friends (BRAC-CAF) committee. Unfortunately, that committee disbanded early in the year. I reconnected with an activist and organizer from the Howard Houses Development. She is a part of Brownsville Voices. She was instrumental in helping to pull the focus group meetings together, and assisted with the other community organizing work of the demonstration project. She also introduced me to the youth organization, Do You Enlightenment & Cultural Empowerment Services (DEUCES).

DEUCES is a youth organization for young people, by young people. The organization helps young people to develop employable skills. They involve young people in enrichment programs in sports, nutrition, music, arts, and culture. We recruited a cadre of about 15 young people from DEUCES to help the project engage the community residents through the questionnaires.

Children of the TEARS (Togetherness Encourages Awareness & Righteous Service) is a youth group that was given birth to out of this demonstration project's work (see Appendix F). I was working closely with a few high school students from the Community. They had great organizing skills. I obtained parental consent for them to be involved with the project. They participated in some of the focus groups and awareness activities. One of them organized a focus session for youth only. During that session, we were able to hear the depth of the young people's concerns about street violence in their community. It was painfully convincing and erased any doubts about the necessity of the work of this project. The name Children of the TEARS was adopted as the official name for the coordinating team of the project.

### **Schedule of Interviews**

Early in 2014, I scheduled interviews with key individuals and community leaders in Brownsville. The were as follows:

**2/21/14** - Activist & organizer, Brownsville Voices

**3/21/14** - Denise Peace, Mother of Zurana Horton

**4/11/14** - Representative from Howard Houses community center

**5/24/14** - Community activist and businessman

**6/10/14** - Leadership from NYCHA President Council

**6/18/14** - Representative from Brownsville Community Justice Center

**7/18/14** - Representative from DUECES,

**7/25/14** - Representative from Van Dyke Houses, Brownsville

**8/16/14** - Former leadership council representative, Howard Houses

**9/26/14** - Leadership council representative, Howard Houses, Brownsville

After the site team and I had analyzed the data on Brownsville's demographics, we decided that it was going to be a tremendous undertaking to focus on the entire community. The 18 NYCHA developments alone consisted of 119 buildings. Some buildings were as high as 25 stories tall. It would be difficult to outreach to the entire population of 86,005 people over a period of 6-9 months. After consulting with some key community residents, I was resolved to limit the work of the project to the one thousand families in the Howard Houses Development. It was easier to organize, coordinate, and implement the plan if done with a smaller, targeted population. I had developed personal contacts in the Howard development over a period of a few years. Building allies and relationships were essential to the implementation of this work.

This project's first community meeting took place on 5/9/14. We secured space at the Brownsville Library located at 61 Glenmore Avenue in Brownsville. I made the acquaintance of the library staff a few years back. They were hospitable and accommodated us with a meeting space for the duration of the project's work. In the event that the library was not available, I also made alternative arrangements with the resident association president of Howard Houses to meet in the community center.

Twenty-five people attended the meeting on 5/9/14. They appeared to have been eager to voice their issues and concerns. A site team member and I outlined their

concerns on a chart ( see Appendix B). I shared that we would use their feedback to frame the questions for the community engagement questionnaire (see Appendix G). I spoke with them about my demonstration project and asked for their support and involvement. They shared that nothing existed in the community for children and families that have been affected by violence in the community. We scheduled the first focus group session for Friday, June 6, 2014.

I announced that I was interested in setting up some focus groups to discuss the issues in greater details and asked if they were interested in participating. They seemed eager. I told them that the meeting would only last one hour and that refreshments would be served. The first focus group session was scheduled for 6/6/14. From the pool of the one thousand families in the development, I anticipated getting a sufficient amount of volunteers for three different focus groups. Each group would consist of 10-15 people meeting for 4 one-hour sessions. This was idealistic planning on my behalf. Even with our outreach by telephone and email, only three of the original participants from the first meeting showed up on 6/20/14.

I collaborated with the site team and the other key advisors on the matter. We came to the conclusion that it was more productive to structure the focus sessions to accommodate random participation. For optimum results, the sessions, activities, and interviews were conveniently scheduled to take place in one of the community's facilities during the daytime.

We made a list of things that were important for organizing and mobilizing the participants for the focus groups.

1. Maintain contact list of attendees.

2. Conduct outreach to participants prior to meetings.
3. Handout leaflets in the community.
4. Publicize meetings within the community, i.e. library, community centers, resident association, newspaper, Facebook
5. Provide refreshments at the meetings.
6. Start and end sessions on time.

We concluded that it was best to make some adjustments and decided that it would be best to entertain a random sample of participants from Howard Houses. The participants who showed up for that session would engage in a guided discussion on the focus topic. The focus groups had the advantage of contextualizing and expanding their responses through group discussions. Their responses were recorded on chart paper and posted in the room with unobstructed visibility. No names were recorded.

After the sessions were over, the participants were free to leave. Those that were not present for any of the previous sessions remained for about 15 minutes. These participants were given the opportunity to contribute to the flow chart of responses from any sessions that they missed. We ensured that the note chart from previous focus session(s) were posted around the room every time we met. In this manner, the participants had a visual of all of the present and previous sessions' responses.

The dates and topics for the focus group sessions were as follows:

**6/06/14** - Describe your community to the group.

**6/20/14** - How long have you lived in Brownsville? Describe your memorable experiences (good or bad).

**7/11/14** - What is the biggest problem(s) facing the Brownsville Community?

**7/25/14** - If you had the power to do so, what would you change about

Brownsville, what would you keep the same?

**8/15/14** - What or who has the power to bring about positive change?

**9/14/14** - In what way is violence affecting the lives of Brownsville's families?  
How is it affecting the children? Who helps these families?

### **Community Awareness Events**

**6/10/14** – Community Rally with Residents and Elected Officials  
Topic: “Taking Action For Better Services and Security Cameras for NYCHA Residents (see Appendix I).”

**6/18/14** – Town Hall Meeting with District Attorney Ken Thompson  
Topic: “Brownsville Matters (see Appendix H).”

**7/14/14** – Meet and Greet with Elected Officials at Heritage House  
Topic: “What will be done about gun violence?”

**7/31/14** – Young People From Brownsville Meet With Borough President Eric Adams  
Topic: “How may be garner resources and support to support children affected by street violence?”

**8/14/14** - Meet and Greet at Brownsville's Library with District 20 – State Senator Candidate  
Topic: “Developing a Public Policy Initiative that addressed the needs of children & families affected by street violence (see Appendix E).”

**10/25/14** – The Annual Shero from around the Way Celebration- 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Zurana Horton's Death, Theme: “Nurturing Living Memories (see Appendix J).”

In the demonstration project's proposal, we projected hosting 3 out of 4 awareness raising activities. Fortunately, we surpassed our goal and employed all three of the strategies successfully. We hosted five activities. The attendance at each event was 53, 150, 35, 25, and 37 respectively.

During the focus groups and awareness activities, we gathered information to find out what the residents knew and believed about their community and gauged their perspectives on Brownsville's reputation of being the most violent community in NYC.

What did the young people say? What did elders say? Were there differences of opinions according to age? My interviews with the key individuals and community leaders were quite helpful. I was able to get some current research from the Community Justice Center. The Youth Justice Board had conducted research in the community to lay the groundwork for the Community Justice Court.

Our goal was to acquire at least 500 questionnaires that represent one-half of the residents living in the Howard Development. A total number of 300 people attended the five awareness activities. We collected 163 questionnaires from these sessions, leaving us 337 questionnaires short of meeting our goal. A few youth representative and I met in mid-July, to strategize. We agreed that the young people of Deuces were up to the job. We organized a questionnaire campaign. The youth of DEUCES worked in pairs under the supervision of community elders.

The campaign was a great success. We completed 395 questionnaires, which exceeded our goal.

The site team and I will meet faithfully for share-outs and updates during this period of time. In the early part of August, we met to do a preliminary analysis of the data.

As we hosted the activities and interacted with participants in focus groups and the larger community, we took note of energetic, interested participants. After our last focus group session on September 14, 2014, I identified 6 individuals (excluding the writer) that would be ideal for the team. These were individuals that were involved in the project's activity at a very high level. Also, they appeared to have understood and

believed in the vision of the project. This team will be incorporate as Children of the TEARS.

After TEARS had been established in September, we met to discuss a plan of action for the strategic plan. At the meeting, all of the 7 members were present, including the 3 young adults (list team). Our meeting agenda took us through the course of the demonstration project's work. Then we looked at the next stage of the work. It was evident from our focus groups and awareness raising activities that we talked a lot about working with public officials to support children and families that have been impacted by street violence. We met with Borough President Eric Adams, Assembly Member Latrice Walker, Council Member Darlene Mealy, and State Senator Jesse Hamilton. In most cases, we received their commitments to support our cause.

This encouraged us to solidify our base. We identified the name of the team as Children of the TEARS. It will become a 501(c)(3), dedicated to the work of supporting children (ages 6-17) and families that reside in the Howard Houses Development in Brownsville, who are suffering from trauma inflicted by street violence. The work of the organization will include but will not be limited to collaborating with public officials on a public policy initiative to support this target population. We were successful in accomplishing eighty percent of the strategic plan.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection method was triangulated. The instruments used for data collection were community engagement questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. This researcher maintained a journal of field notes during the entire process. As suggested by Creswell, these field notes and interview results were using an



observational and an interview protocols<sup>179</sup>. These protocols helped us to maintain and managed the data.

Google.Docs was an application utilized in our data analysis process. The data from the 558 questionnaires was input into Google.Docs. This application crunched the data and provided a summary consisting of charts, graphs and percentages (see Appendix F).

### **Reliability and Validity**

We gave careful consideration to the process of collecting data in order to make the products as reliable as possible. The questionnaires, interview questions, field note protocols can easily be replicated by another researcher. The one factor that we did not make allowances for at the onset of the study was the translation of questionnaires in Spanish. We were aware that the percentage of the population whose is of Hispanic heritage is 17%. The team came across approximately 5 people who wanted to participate in the study, but did not have a good command of English. In these instances, we swiftly located a translator within the vicinity. Unfortunately, the translator was not privy to vital background information pertaining to the study due to not being given an advance orientation. So they weren't always able to give informed responses when questions arose by those being solicited. Therefore, we are uncertain how much the results may have been skewed by this oversight.

Another consideration in the data collection process that we didn't make allowances for was the inability of some residents to read and comprehend the questionnaire. We had experienced a few situations in the focus groups where participants could not read well or not at all. Being equipped with this information, the

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<sup>179</sup> Creswell, 183.

facilitator gave the resident responding to the questionnaire, the option of having the questions read to him/her, and the facilitator would record his/her responses. Chapter 6 covers this in greater details.

Lastly, through our focus group discussions, we became aware that a couple of the key terms needed to be defined in the written context of the questionnaire. Question #7 on the questionnaire reads, “If yes to 6, has any of your child(ren) ever been affected by street violence in the community?” Some participants were unsure of our working definitions for “affected” and “street violence”. We will discuss this at greater length in Chapter 6. It was fortunate that we had collected only 86 questionnaires when the problem was detected. The correction was affixed to the remaining 462 copies. A pilot study could have alleviated these problems.

## CHAPTER 6

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

#### **Revisiting the Purpose**

This demonstration project was designed to gather data about Brownsville, Brooklyn through the perspectives of the community residents and documented sources. The goal was to create a strategic plan for an initiative to support young people between ages 6-17 that reside in the Howard Houses in the Brownsville community in Brooklyn, New York, and have been affected by street violence.

The research questions served as the compass to our inquiry for the information gathering process. It utilized qualitative strategies and action research protocols.

We used 3 methods in the data collection process. Questionnaires, interviews and focus groups were the methods chosen to conduct this study. The importance of triangulating this data enabled us to gain perspectives from three angles of vision, the insider, the outsider and the researcher.<sup>180</sup> The researcher and the site team designed all of the instruments. They were thoughtfully created to probe the human subjects and written sources for answers to the four research questions.

The value of utilizing ethnographic strategies allowed the researcher to become a co-creator with the participants in the process of information gathering.<sup>181</sup> Time was spent with the people in their authentic environment. All of the focus group sessions and

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<sup>180</sup>Sensing, 75.

<sup>181</sup>Sensing, 13.

some awareness activities took place in the Brownsville Library and the Howard Houses community center. We also hosted an event at a reputable cultural institution in the community, Heritage House. An educator and civil rights activist, Mother Rosetta Gaston, founded Heritage House in 1981. Two of the community's schools, PS 298 and PS/IS 323 were also utilized as event venues.

### **Research Questions and Findings**

This researcher developed a snapshot of Brownsville's history from the perspectives of a sample population of residents in focus groups, community engagement questionnaires and field notes from interviews and observations. Research data from journal articles, newspapers, magazines and books complemented our findings. The bulk of the respective is reflected in Chapter 3 of this paper.

We ensured that a range of ages was represented in our sample:

Under 12 years old.

Between 13 and 17 years old.

Between 18 and 35 years old.

Between 36 and 45 years old.

Between 46 and 55 years old.

Between 56 and 65 years old.

Over 65 years old.

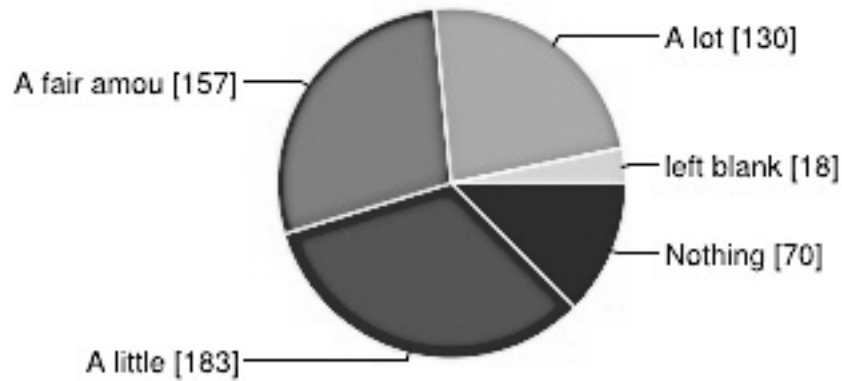
When the site team and I analyzed the data from the questionnaires, we noted that the age category with the highest number of participants was between 18-35. One hundred and eighty-seven participants, 34% were represented in this category. We did not collect any biographical data from focus groups participants other than names and contact

information. It was important that the participants' identity remain confidential. More females participated than males. Sixty percent of the questionnaire participants were female. Thirty-eight percent was male. We noticed that more females than males also attended the focus group sessions.

It was important to gain some data on participant's length of time living in Brownsville. The spreadsheet summary revealed that some participants had lived in the area for as long as 80, 64, 61 53, 50, 40 years. The answer that occurred most frequently to this question was 25 years. Less than 5 out of the 558 questionnaire respondents indicated that they had been living in Brownsville for less than a year.

When given five choices to select a response about their level of knowledge about the history of Brownsville, the largest percentage (33%) of the participants indicated that they know little about the community. Twenty-three percent said that they knew a lot. See figure A. We noted that the results from the interviews and the questionnaires were fairly similar. However, in the focus group discussions, it did come to our attention that quite a few people interpreted the question differently. Some thought that we were asking about the history of things and events that occurred in the community since they moved there. A small percentage did mention that it was a community once inhabited by Jews. We gathered that they were proud of some famous Brownsville natives. Some people mentioned: Mike Tyson, Jay-Z, RZA and Mother Gaston. One focus group participant enlightened the group when she said, "Mother Gaston Boulevard is named after a famous person. She was Black."

### **Community History - How much do you know about Brownsville?**



Nothing	70	13%
A little	183	33%
A fair amount	157	28%
A lot	130	23%
Left blank	18	3%

Figure A. Community Residents' Knowledge Of Brownsville's History

Mother Rosetta Gaston (1885 – 1981) was born in a tenement and lived most of her life in Brownsville. She did not have much formal education but wanted to educate others about their history, especially African-American children. She acquired most of her knowledge about history through attending seminars. She spent her life gathering groups of children and adults and shared what she had learned with them.

She dreamed of opening a cultural center where African-American people could learn about their history. Her dream was finally realized in March of 1981 when, one month after her passing, the Heritage House Historical Cultural Center opened in Brownsville. Located in Brownsville is the street sign bearing the name Mother Gaston Boulevard, the pioneer who fought for youth and civil rights.<sup>182</sup>

All of the methods gave the participants an opportunity to express if they wanted to know more about Brownsville. Out of the total number of questionnaires participants, a majority of 70% responded in the affirmative. The focus group and interviews responses were consistent with this finding.

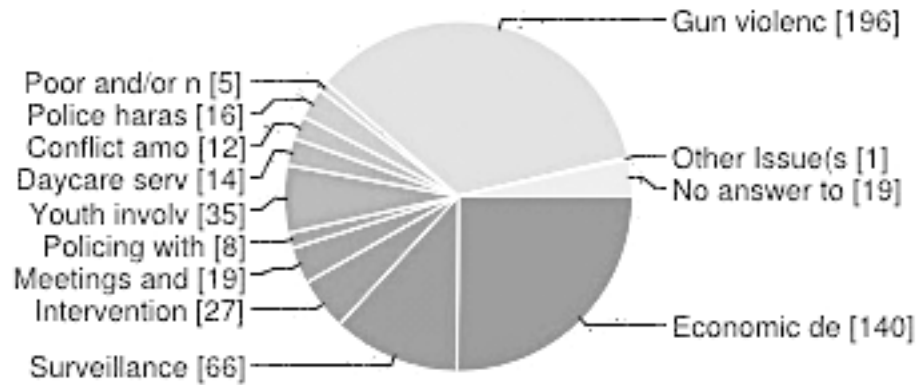
<sup>182</sup> Brooklyn Public Library & The New York Times, <http://www.brooklyn.com/streets.html> (accessed January 5, 2015).

All of the participants were asked, the question “What is good about living in the Brownsville Community”? Most of the participants mentioned good things. Only 20 out of the 558 participants stated that there is “nothing” good in the neighborhood. A small number mentioned that it would be a good community without the gun violence. Several people mentioned the community’s parks, recreation centers, swimming pools, and basketball courts. There were frequent mentions of the accessibility to public transportation. Libraries, churches, and schools were listed as things that add value to the community.

As mentioned before, the questionnaire was created from the first community-organizing meeting held on Friday, May, 9, 2014 (see Appendix D). It gave the participants the opportunity to weigh in on the issues and priorities. We listed those issues on the questionnaire and asked each participant to rank each one as a first priority of concern. Out of the 13 choices, the issue of greatest concern was gun violence. Thirty-five percent indicated as such. (See Figure B). Gun Violence ranked higher on their list of concerns than youth involvement programs, surveillance cameras in buildings, daycare services, conflict among young people in the developments, police harassment, and economic development.

Figure C gives us an indication of how the participants responded regarding the same items as their second priority for concern areas. The graph illustrates that public safety remained in the people’s hearts and heads as the primary issue. Surveillance cameras in the buildings out rank all of the other issues.

### **Ranking the issues - How important are these issues to you?**



Economic development	<b>140</b>	25%
Surveillance cameras in buildings	<b>66</b>	12%
Intervention programs for young people	<b>27</b>	5%
Meetings and/or safe spaces for residents to voice their concerns	<b>19</b>	3%
Policing within the housing development	<b>8</b>	1%
Youth involvement programs afterschool, recreational, activities, jobs, cultural awareness	<b>35</b>	6%
Daycare services	<b>14</b>	3%
Conflict among youths in the development	<b>12</b>	2%
Police harassment and/or no political representation	<b>16</b>	3%
Poor and/or no political representation	<b>5</b>	1%
Gun violence	<b>196</b>	35%
Other Issue(s)	<b>1</b>	0%
No answer to this question	<b>19</b>	3%

Figure B. Community residents ranking the issues.



### Ranking Issues- Second Priority

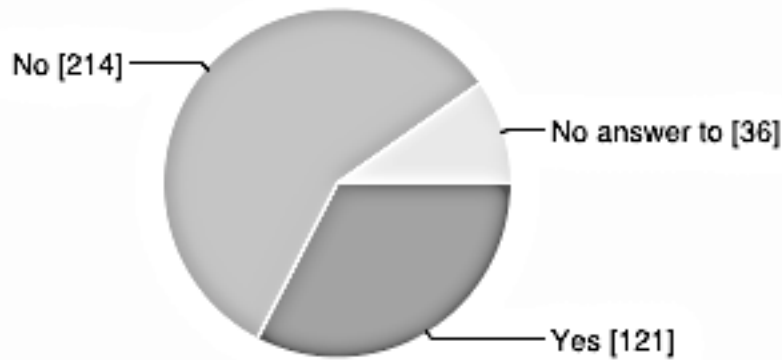


Economic development	50	9%
Surveillance cameras in buildings	125	22%
Intervention programs for young people	69	12%
Meetings and/or safe spaces for residents to voice their concerns	30	5%
Policing within the housing development	42	8%
Youth involvement programs: afterschool, recreational activities, jobs, cultural awareness	25	4%
Daycare services	28	5%
Conflict among youths in the developments	28	5%
Police harassment and/or stop and frisk	71	13%
Poor and/or no political representation	34	6%
Gun violence	31	6%
Other issue(s)	0	0%
No answer to this question.	25	4%

Figure C. Community resident's second choices of ranking of issues.

Out of the 558 questionnaire participants, 58% were parents. Out of the 58% of parents, 22% answered, "yes" that their child(ren) had been affected by street violence in the community. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the participants answered "no" to that question. Six (6) percent left it blank.

### Children and Trauma - Have your child(ren) been affected by street violence?



Yes	<b>121</b>	22%
No	<b>214</b>	38%
No answer to question	<b>36</b>	6%

Figure D. Percentage of parents with children affected by street violence.

In the focus groups, almost one-third of the participants who had children indicated that their children were affected by the street violence in the community. As we were discussing this question, we became aware of a flaw in the design of our questionnaire. Initially, the word “affected” was not defined by the questionnaires. When we discussed this question in the focus sessions, participants asked for clarification immediately. One participant questioned, “Are you talking about just shooting or people fighting and yelling in the street?”

Therefore, the residents who participated through the questionnaires drew on their interpretation of the intended meaning of “affected.” We formulated a working definition of the term: someone who is injured or harmed physically, emotionally, or psychologically from shootings, in the street. It also includes those who suffered trauma from witnessing an act of street violence. After we had cleared this up, we did amend the

questionnaires by affixing the working definition for “affected”. Unfortunately, this oversight may have skewed the overall results for this item.

When given the opportunity to share comments of their choice about the environment or conditions in the community, the majority of focus groups and questionnaire participants responded with a comment relating to public safety. They expressed concerns about neighborhood gangs, gun violence, and the safety children. All of the people that we interviewed agreed that violence is a problem in Brownsville. Additionally, they were rather closely aligned about the root cause(s) of the problem. Everyone agreed that violence is senseless. A businessman and community activist, stated that he and many others have tried to reason with young people to curb the violence. He told them that the idea of community streets belonging to any particular group or person is nonsense. “Many people who thought that they owned the streets of Brownsville are dead. The streets remain as a permanent fixture in the community. No one could take it with them or affix their name to it!”<sup>183</sup> A representative from the Community Justice Center told me that he has not been able to put his fingers on the pulse of the root cause of the violence in Brownsville.<sup>184</sup> Both of these individuals support an initiative that aids children who have been affected by street violence.

According to the research, Brownsville is considered to be a poor community with a high level of violence. Nevertheless, it is not a community without resources for children. In each of the 18 housing developments, there is a community center. The centers are at different functioning levels. For example Van Dyke, Tilden, and Seth Low

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<sup>183</sup> Community activist and businessman, interview by author, Brooklyn, New York, May 24, 2014.

<sup>184</sup> James Brodick, interview by author, Brooklyn, New York, June 18, 2014.

Developments have renovated centers with great social, cultural, and educational programs for the children and the community. There is also the Brownsville Recreational Center, which is run by the Parks Department. Its' programs include swimming, boxing, and an array of youth-oriented recreational activities. There is a swimming pool on the grounds of the Howard Houses development. The community's schools are conveniently located. There are many churches and a couple of mosques. A firehouse is strategically located almost in the center of the Howard Houses Development. The community residents mentioned the convenience of having businesses and shopping areas in walking distance.

Brownsville is also fortunate to have two libraries that are well resourced. In April of 2014, the New York Times did a feature on the role that the Brownsville Library plays in the lives of children. "The Brownsville library opened in September of 1914 and was among the first free-standing children's libraries in the nation."<sup>185</sup> In reference to the community's children, the librarian, Jocelyn Maynard said,

They stay here all day in the summer. From 10 in the morning to 6 in the evening. When we get her at 9:45 the kids are waiting for us. There's no going home for lunch. The parents do not have money to send them to summer camp. The neighborhood school provides meals for them. The kids are scared to go to the parks because there's factions, There's gangs. The kids from this project and the kids from that project is always 'beefin' so the kids come here. If we didn't have this here, what would a lot of these kids do?<sup>186</sup>

Our young focus group participants did share that the library is a sanctuary for them after school and in the summer. Many reported visiting the library daily. According to them, the resources are important, but most importantly, it is a safe environment.

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<sup>185</sup> Edna Ishayik, "A Brownsville Sanctuary, 100 Years and Counting," nytimes.com 18 April 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1iy5prS> (accessed July 18, 2014).

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

Given the current circumstances, the participants were asked for feedback on how to address the issues. Respondents were asked to rank 6 strategies from the greatest to least order of importance. The item that ranked the highest with 34% was petitions. (See Figure E). Community meetings and grant writing ranked the second highest in ways to address the concerns. They both received a 15 percent ranking.

#### How To Address The Issues - How should the issues be addressed?



Petitions	187	34%
Study groups	53	9%
Speakers	52	9%
Grant writing to get money for programs	81	15%
Rallies and marches	59	11%
Community meetings	81	15%
No answer to Question	45	8%

Figure E. Community residents express choice in addressing issues.

In the focus groups, the participants shared that community meeting was most important to them. In their judgment, community meetings are safe venues for them to discuss issues and concerns. They also provide a format for them to organized around issues.

### **Was the Research Questions Answered?**

In conclusion, there are quite a number of programs, organizations, and institutions that provide cultural, social, and educational outlets for children. The reality is that the fractionalization of the community by physical structures, social isolation, and violence, prohibits widespread use of these programs by the entire community. For this reason, each program is limited to supporting and servicing a subgroup of the community's overall population.

Our research also revealed that there are only a few youth led organizations in Brownsville that supports young people. Do You Enlightenment & Cultural Empowerment services (DEUCES) is one of them. This organization literally gathers youth off the street and engages them in educational, cultural, and recreational programs. One of the programs ran by DEUCES is an afterschool program called, "Mannies, Nannies, and Grannies." This is a mentoring program for teen mothers and fathers. Elders in the community mentor them.

Elevated Expectations is another community base organization that we identified with youth leadership. They have acquired 501(c)(3) status. Their mission is to provide positive outlets, which promote social and cultural awareness and holistic development of children and families.

Base upon the research, there are no resources anywhere in the community that target children (ages 6-17) whose lives have been impacted by street violence. In this regard, the research did accomplish the purpose for which it was designed. Our research questions ascertained crucial information to move forward with servicing the community,

specifically the children, broken due to street violence. The next steps are to work on the 501(c)(3) status of TEARS and continue the work of the strategic plan.

In conclusion, the community responded well to the idea of establishing a living memorial to Zurana Horton through this project. The focus group sessions, interviews, and community engagement questionnaires helped us to accomplished the goals and unite on a unified agenda for moving the project forward.

The conversations about the project are so refreshing. As I walk around the community, children come up to me and ask, “when are we going on a trip?” or “will we have another focus group session to talk about kids stuff?”

The residents expressed appreciation for having elected officials, clergy, and community leaders come into the community to collaborate on this initiative. They were really excited about the support that the State Senator had pledged to build the programming and infrastructure of the community centers.

The team, TEARS, appears to be excited about working on youth development.

As we were working on the community engagement questionnaires, I noticed that young people participated from more than one of the NYCHA developments. Exciting conversations about the experiences and interactions generally received more attention than the fears of encountering problems from young residents in other developments. Many of them were surprised to discover who some of their neighbors were. I saw so many excited faces as they reconnected with people they thought had moved out of the neighborhood.

The “Nurturing Living Memories” program (see Appendix E) was one of the highlights of the work of this demonstration project. During this event, Brownsville

residents, elected officials, community leaders, and Zurana Horton's family came together in a space close to the place when she was killed to pay tribute to the slain shero. The young people that participated in the work of the demonstration project were present and paid tribute to Zurana Horton's children and her mother.

We were able to share the strategic plan with the community and discuss our next steps. Elected officials, community leaders, and clergy reiterated their commitment to the work of the project. The powerful ministry of music from the soloist and the praise dances by the children fed us spiritually. When the pianist sang, "Save The Children," I felt that the purpose of the work was accentuated. Then Zurana Horton's father sang, "A Change Is Going To Come" by Sam Cooke. It was the best way to end the program and embark on the next phase of our work.



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES**

#### **The Site Team's Assessment of Candidate**

Prior to the implementation of the work, my site team's assessment of my competencies were as follows:

##### **Faith-Rooted Community Organizer**

When the organizers of New York's Occupy Wall Street decided - for the first time - to have a member of the clergy address the "occupiers", they reached out to Rev. Elizabeth Butler, having been made aware of her understanding of and commitment to social justice. This long-standing commitment includes organizing groups of people, both church members and non-church members, for social justice action that is most definitely faith-rooted. The media coverage of the event included a photo of Rev. Butler on the platform speaking to the large crowd; the rapt and attentive faces of the listeners served to witness the power of her political message presented in biblical context.

##### **Theologian**

"Biblical Engagement" is the title of the Bible Study classes conducted by Rev. Butler. Held in a community-based-organization, the participants are truly *engaged* as they are led through specific scripture and receive instruction not only as to meaning and interpretation of the word, but, importantly, given an opportunity to reflect on the

relevance of the Bible lesson to their own lived experiences. Rev. Butler's sermons are excellent vehicles: 1) in terms of how the Spirit moves among the congregation, and 2) as explanation of biblical doctrine in the context of people, places and traditions of a specific time.

### **Preacher**

Preaching is formal speech presentation with the goal of persuasion. To that end, Rev. Butler's effectiveness results from meticulously researched sermons delivered in a spirit-guided manner. Her style is conversational and spirited. Organized with a beginning/introduction, the text/scripture with its inherent challenges to the congregation builds to a crescendo of *Spirit in the House!* The challenges are accompanied by relevant, often contemporary examples as guidance for the life concerns facing the congregation. In other words; message of hope and Thanks to God for Grace.

### **Worship Leader**

As befitting its name - *Church of New Beginnings* - offers a worship experience that is both grounded in tradition and creativity. Years of experience as an educator in the New York City Public School system has equipped Rev. Butler with knowledge of how to move participants through processes, i.e., liturgy and ceremony. Skilled in explication, she is able to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for the congregation. As expected, on specific occasions (e.g. Easter) her leadership in terms of the sermon and other remarks is in keeping with biblical and church tradition. However, in her broadened concept of a worship leader, she has also created time and space for special occasions, such as acknowledging accomplishments of the church youth.

### **Prophetic Agent**

*Speaking Truth to Power* has been the rallying cry for many social justice movements as well as a challenge to those who would lead. The "prophet" thus speaks having analyzed individuals and institutions in position to help or hinder, to build or destroy. Rev. Butler brings discernment to societal issues and speaks a truth with love and compassion, especially for victims of oppression. Her work around the slain mother Korana Horton is a specific strategy for change. We have witnessed the effects of her healing ministry as she prayed with individuals on sidewalks, in hospital rooms, in auditoriums - wherever the Lord has directed her steps.

### **Leader**

At the Church of New Beginnings, Rev. Butler's leadership has created an environment conducive to spiritual growth and development. As she freely shares her own spiritual journey, she inspires all to embrace their "gifts of the Spirit". A leader pays attention to and gives careful thought to people's lives. Based on these insights and careful listening, Rev. Butler is able to not only delegate but to also motivate and encourage higher reaching. A leader also sees opportunities for ministry through current events; the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington was an event that the Church of New Beginnings participated in as an organized group of church members and friends. In preparation for the event, Rev. Butler discussed King's philosophy, his ministry and the ongoing struggle for social and economic justice.

### **Religious Educator**

Rev. Butler's years of experience with the Board of Education has equipped her with Master Teacher tools. Utilizing these tools for religious education, she teaches religious and ethical concepts using sound pedagogy. Because she understands varied learning styles, she is able to develop appropriate educational strategies - a consequence of her love of learning coupled with her biblical knowledge. A teacher must organize her classroom -structure, course content, learning aids - in order to achieve desired outcomes. Rev. Butler teaches religious education in a parallel manner.

### **Counselor**

I (Safiya Bandle) have benefitted personally from Rev. Butler's healing work as a counselor. First, during my hospitalization and, second, during the grieving period when my mother made her transition. In both of those painful circumstances, Rev. Butler's ability to assist me in working through those difficult times was invaluable. A third personal reference is the counseling received by my daughter and her husband during their marriage crisis. At the first sign of "marital trouble", I urged them to seek Rev. Butler's counsel and guidance, which helped them immensely. In a very courageous fashion, Rev. Butler has - from the pulpit - discussed her own difficulties and utilization of therapy. This sharing has been tremendously important in giving others encouragement also to seek "outside" help. Countless individuals have brought their life's trials and tribulations to her because of her accessibility, her authenticity, and her reassurances that be God wants us to be healthy in mind, body and spirit.

### **Pastor**

In her role as undershepherd at the Church of New Beginnings, Rev. Butler considers each member of her flock as deserving of individualized attention and guidance on their life journey. Accordingly, she spends quality time with members, attentive to their spiritual and personal development. Whether leading by example from the pulpit, conducting church rituals, teaching Bible Study, facilitating church business or discussing her self-care, Rev. Butler is secure in her role as Pastor. As a result, members often publicly acknowledge her role in their spiritual growth as they deepen their relationship with God.

### **Spiritual Leader**

Rev. Butler is an acknowledged Spiritual Leader in her community as evidenced by the frequency of requests to officiate and/or deliver eulogies. Often, these are non-church going community residents who are drawn to Rev. Butler through witnessing or experiencing her spiritual presence and power. At a recent event, she was introduced as "The People's Pastor". Being cognizant of the varied belief systems and paths, Rev. Butler always speaks from her Christian faith while respectfully acknowledging other spiritual practices. Visitors to *Church of New Beginnings* may include practitioners of West African Yoruba, Islam, Catholicism and Hindu - all made to feel welcome by Rev. Butler as a Spiritual Leader who is grounded and open to new knowledge - all to the Glory of God - and she would add "according to your beliefs".

### **Ecumenist**

Rev. Butler participates in community interfaith, and interdenominational entities formed to address quality-of-life issues. It is especially significant given the historical marginalization that she - a Black clergywoman - is not only present *in the room*, but that

she knows *what to say* in the room! Additionally, as a well-travelled leader, Rev. Butler infuses her ministry with global references.

### **Witness or Evangelist**

As a messenger of the Living Word, Rev. Butler uses her own experiences to proclaim with fervent passion the Lord's promise to the faithful. She bears witness in a powerfully profound manner both inside and outside of the church's boundaries. When the Spirit of the Lord comes over Rev. Butler, the observer may also feel the energy; indeed, one might say the energy travels around the room. This excerpt from a poem about Rev. Butler speaks to that energy: "*She brings the good news of God's Grace/Available to all/She brings the Good News of the resilience of the human spirit/She travels with the Word/Leaving her message, her footprint and fragrance for all.*"<sup>187</sup>

### **Administrator**

*Church of New Beginnings* as an institution benefits from Rev. Butler's serving as Chief Administrator. Congregational involvement in activities and programs is ensured through task analysis and strategic planning. An excellent example is the annual observance of the church anniversary. The event's success is due to Rev. Butler's administrative leadership: full discussion of the goals, guidance toward objectives, delegation of responsibilities, the creation of an environment conducive to the exchange of ideas and the utilization of members' gifts. Rev. Butler is the personification of the leader as described by Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie: Women leaders tend to solicit

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<sup>187</sup> Safiya Bandele, Poem to the Author, January 20, 2014. E-mail.

input, teach, and create positive working environments. "They tend to discard the hierarchy so the leader is at the center rather than at the top."<sup>188</sup>

### **Professional**

The ministry should be treated as a profession: an occupation or vocation requiring training in the liberal arts... and/or advanced study in a specialized field. Rev. Butler's professionalism is evident in the following indicators and competencies: 1) Too often ministers excel in *verbal* communication and prowess, giving short shrift to written communication. Rev. Butler, however, is as skilled in **written communication** as she is in verbal communication and has a body of written materials as evidence. 2) In work production, i.e., **performance of tasks**, Rev. Butler has a track record of both church and community-related accomplishments. One example is her work with the Medgar Evers College Clergy Women Project. 3) The professional understands team work or group dynamics and has the **ability to communicate** and motivate towards the desired outcomes.

### **Financial Management**

For this category, we lack direct specific knowledge; however, Church of New Beginnings' history and administration indicate financial competency and solvency.

### **Technology/Social Media Management**

Rev. Butler designed the striking logo for Church of New Beginnings and has subsequently and consistently produced "dazzling" layouts and materials for the church. As leader, she has fully embraced social media and has a rich presence online.

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<sup>188</sup> Larry R. Hygh Jr., "A Qualitative Leadership Study of the Four Female African American Bishops of the United Methodist Church" (PHD Dissertation, Pepperdine University, 2008).

## **I Have Grown**

### **Competencies Chosen for Development**

The area of fiscal management was one of the areas chosen for professional growth and development. I have always shied away from much involvement with the management of fiscal affairs. The church trustees oversee the church's budgetary affairs. Periodically, we have conversations about various aspects of budgets and development. However, I am not immersed or adept in this area of the church's operation. Our church's operations relating to fiscal affairs can be enhanced. The method that brings in the most revenue is Tithes. Nearly 75% of the membership tithes. Additionally, there are occasional fundraising events that help incrementally. We have not tapped into the other ways in which faith based organizations can raise funds.

Fiscal affairs is a broad area. Within this category, grant writing is a practical skill that I have an interest in acquiring some. Therefore, my competency chosen for this area was to develop a more adept understanding of writing grants. Two strategies were outlined in my proposal that would lead to my gaining knowledge and experience in this area. One strategy was to attend a grant-writing workshop.

As the work of this demonstration project was being implemented, the discussion of grant writing emerged on a number of occasions. One of the site team members took us through a brief discussion of the topic and offered her services to do more training. On another occasion, my community-organizing (Micah) cohort explored the idea of including a training session during our work and study retreat in Atlanta, of January 2014. Two of our cohort members have expertise in this field. They were willing to conduct a session for the team. Unfortunately, the time was consumed with our



demonstration project proposals. Supporting each other individually and collectively, took precedent over everything else.

As, not to allow this competency to remain untapped, I have identified a young grant writer in the Brownsville Community. She told me that whenever I am ready, she would provide individual coaching for me and/or design a training session for a group of selected participants.

Faith-rooted organizing is the other area chosen for personal growth and development. I chose Dr. Conrad Worrill as a faith-rooted organizer to interview and shadow. Dr. Worrill is the chairperson of The Jacob H. Carruthers Center For Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. He is a professor, a community organizer, a newspaper columnist and a radio talk show host. He believes that scholarship and activism can be married and thrive harmoniously. Dr. Worrill is a Black nationalist that has a profound love for his people. His life has been spent in a tireless fight for the liberation of the oppressed. His passionate struggle has taken him on so many fronts and to many places around the world. He represented the voices of the poor in the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa during the anti-apartheid struggle. He represented the descendants of enslaved Africans in the fight for reparations in Geneva Switzerland. He fought for justice in many cases of unjust police slaying of African-American people and helped to organize the Million Man's March. He is a warrior who has never become weary fighting for justice and liberation.

I had the opportunity to spend a considerable amount of time with Dr. Worrill on June 30, 2014 – July 2, 2014. I took the opportunity to talk to him about his life, love, and passion for activism. It was convincingly clear that one of the figures that have

influenced Dr. Worrill's life was his father. He talks about his deceased father with love, respect, and great admiration. He decisively calls his father, "his hero." His father was one of the leaders of the NAACP who fought against the unfair treatment of Blacks in Brookside Park in Pasadena California. This facility discriminated against Blacks in use of the swimming pool. If Blacks used the pool, it was drained afterward.

The other thing that I gathered from this long time activist and educator is that an organizer has to love people. Dr. Worrill loves people selflessly. His advocacy never wanes for people in need. People who know him shares that he almost never call to ask for something for himself. It is always in the line of service for others that he makes a request. He serves and gives when he has plenty or when he has little.

He talked a lot about integrity in the struggle. He is of the opinion that the best faith-rooted organizers are those who seek no recognition or aggrandizement for himself/herself, but keep his/her eye on the prize of liberation. According to him, an organizer rooted in faith, struggles from the base of justice and keeps moving from there. He has no appreciation for people who "pimps the legacy" of other faith-rooted organizers to make a name for themselves. Such individuals find it almost unavoidable to praise or lift up the accomplishments of someone else without implicating themselves. Sooner or later these people are exposed and cease to be an effective instrument of change in this society. Dr. Worrill supports the work of this demonstration project and shared relevant resources with me.

The third ministerial competency that I chose for personal growth and development was to set examples of my observance of spiritual disciplines including the ability to observe, "Sabbath Rest" i.e., a regular time of retreat for spiritual refreshment

and renewal. My strategies for meeting this goal were to plan 7 monthly spiritual life activities and actually be present and participate in each one.

One of the more beneficial and powerfully liberating things that I did during this time of study was to take a sabbatical from the responsibilities of the pastorate. Inclusive of 2014, I will have been a pastor for 21 years. I was in service every Sunday for worship during those years except for rare occasions. There were a few times that I had to go out of town to attend to family business. I missed one service due to illness and maybe a few for vacations. I structured my vacations around my responsibilities to the church. During those times that I traveled for leisure, I made sure that I was back on Sundays for service.

I started my sabbatical rest from the church in January of 2014. On the second Sunday of January of 2014, I was relaxing in bed watching Oprah interview someone on a program called, “Super Soul Sunday.” It was my very first time watching it. They were talking about things of a spiritual nature. At the very end of the program, Oprah asked the guest questions such as, “Who is God?” “What is prayer?” “Define Spirit?” “What do you know for sure?” Once I finished watching the program, I started to meditate in my journal about the questions that they conversed about. Then, I looked forward to another time where I could have the pleasure of a time of quiet meditation like the one that I was experiencing. It was spiritually refreshing and enlightening. I made plans to take in at least one of these shows a month.

I joined a gym with spa like amenities. I designated every first Monday of the month to be a spa day. On spa Mondays, I participated in water aerobics classes, enjoyed the relaxation of the steam room, and sauna, and simply relaxed. Taking in a full body massage was something that I looked forward to bimonthly.

Once a week I refrained from overdosing on heavy reading or studies. I partook of lighter food for the spirit and the body. Once while sipping on Spearmint tea, I read *True Love – A Practice for Awakening the Heart*, by Thich Nhat Hanh. There was another occasion when I listened to Jazz from Ethiopia and nibbled on grapes and cantaloupes while refreshing my thirst buds with cool water, tangerine slices, and mint leaves. Periodically, I would venture into my library and find a small book that I enjoyed reading. I would sit on the floor and read it one more time. One of my most enjoyable books is called, *Moments For Pastors* by Robert Strand.

The work of this demonstration project and the time away from the duties of the church helped me to do something that I did when I was in my twenties. I met God in a new place. The place that I am referring to is actually not a physical place. It is a place of spiritual enlightenment. I feel that I am now seeing God in a different way than I am accustomed to. In addition to looking for God to move and manifest power largely in the church, I am more in tuned to look for God in other places and faces.

In April of 2013, I was in awe of the powerful witness of Christ through the work of Street *Ministries* in Memphis, Tennessee. The *Street Ministries* Complex is located next to a church. Judging from my observation of the parishioners outside of the church on the day of our visit, I concluded that the church was a traditional institutional. When we pulled up in the parking lot that Sunday Morning in April, I immediately took note of something familiar. Some parishioners had exited their vehicles and were walking toward the church's entrance. Most of them were almost elegantly dressed. Others wore the traditional black and white church uniforms and attire. None was dressed in jeans and casual clothing like my traveling companions and I. They spoke with each other in

solemn tones. Most of them appeared to have paid little attention to us. Not one greeted us.

As I stood among my colleagues, I reflected on myself. I was wondering if I looked and acted in this manner on my way to worship service on Sundays. I wondered if my posture invited people to join me on my faith journey. On the other hand, do I discourage them?

When we walked through the parking lot and went into the million dollars Street *Ministries* complex, I was relieved. I was relieved that we were not going into the “judgment zone” of the church on that Sunday. We entered the huge modern facility and heard about the *Street Ministries* program from Reggie Davis. Afterward, I said, “amen.” I felt that I had witnessed a powerful holistic ministry for young people. It was a demonstration of God’s work outside of the church.

Programs such as these are rooted in faith. In faith-rooted ministries, we celebrate the divinity in every single human being. In doing so, we must find ways to let those who are not welcomed in the church and disappointed in humans, find a way to connect with God.

## APPENDIXES

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Demonstration Project Proposal**

A CHILDREN’S FUND:  
“HONORING THE SACRIFICE OF A SHE/RO FROM AROUND THE WAY”

By

ELIZABETH BUTLER

### **DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL**

February 1, 2014

#### **Challenge Statement**

I have served as an activist minister for 35 years in Brooklyn, New York. Statistics indicate that 40% of the children in Brownsville, East Brooklyn are living below the federal poverty level. It is also rated as one of the most violent communities in New York City, lacking adequate resources to address these problems. This demonstration project will create a strategic plan for a Children’s Fund (honoring Zurana Horton) to provide positive outlets for a targeted number of children whose lives have been directly impacted by street violence.

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

In December of 2012, Church of New Beginnings did something that we have done six times since the inception of the ministry. We packed up the supplies and moved the church's location. On that crisp December morning, our small congregation of 25, mostly adult women, and a sprinkling of children, arrived to prepare for the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

On this Sunday morning, we walked into the beautiful space of *For My Sweet Garden Space and Kalahari Art Gallery*, located on Fulton Street and Claver Place in Brooklyn, New York. This beautiful, renovated, ground level, spacious, open air Brownstone gallery in central Brooklyn serves as a venue for many other community events.

As we prepared for service that morning, I moved about the gallery feeling a bit nervous but very excited. I could not help but reflect on the journey of nineteen years. In December of 1993, there was no one except me attending to every detail. I prayed and prepared all week, and stayed up straight through the night to transform my Brooklyn brownstone apartment into a worship space. Joyce Shelby, a New York Daily News reporter captured the ministry's beginning in a 1996 article.

The Rev. Elizabeth Butler's calling card could easily read, "Have church, will travel," because that's exactly what Butler and her small congregation do almost every Sunday.

On the first Sunday of every month, the Church of New Beginnings meets at Butler's home in Bedford Stuyvesant. The rest of the time, the congregation goes into the home of anyone who wants to have a service: homebound elderly people, people with AIDS, people in tough neighborhoods where Christians are few and far between, bereaved families- still too broken to attend church.

"We've gone into homes to dedicate babies. I just did two babies in the home of one family at Christmas. It was very special," said Butler.

The 42 year-old literacy teacher founded the nondenominational church three years ago to reach the "spiritually apathetic."

Butler said she knew 10 years ago that she would become a pastor.

"Through my journey prior to starting a church, a number of people had told me if I ever did, they would want to be a part of it. I collected those names," Butler said.

And when she was ready to start her church, she called the people who would need to help her fulfill her vision.

Ordained by American Baptist Church in 1991, Butler was an associate pastor at Salvation Baptist Church and director of the African American Women in Ministry at New York Theological Seminary.

The Charleston, South Carolina native came to Brooklyn as a teenager. She and her husband Clarence Michael Forestier have an adult son.

About twenty people showed up for the first Sunday service. Butler said soon afterward, the church began traveling.

When Butler and her congregation arrived for the 11am Sunday service, they have their own small lectern, Bibles, a cassette recorder, worship tapes, and the weekly church bulletin.

"Our services are lively," said Butler, "Not as lively as the Pentecostals", but there is freedom to express praise."

Members also sometimes take food to serve during fellowship sessions after the worship service.

We want to give our host a sense of relief for the day. We tell them, “Don’t cook. We’ll bring the food”, Butler said.

And wherever the church goes, the offering plate is passed.

“We leave the offering at the home” said Butler. They often try to give it back, but so often the home is in need. We tell them “You keep it”

Hermina Jackson, who is a quadriplegic, said Church Of New Beginnings had a wonderful service at her home recently.

“It was just like church in my living room. I want to do it again, and one of my neighbors wants to have the service in a little bigger space so more people can come.” Jackson said.

“It’s a good idea for reaching out to people.” said Jackson, who lives in East New York.

Safiya Bandele, a member of Church of New Beginnings and director of the Center for Women’s development at Medgar Evers College, said the traveling experience allows people to break out of the traditional church mold.

“Particularly for the people who are distrustful who don’t like hypocrisy and disconnectedness often within the church. This church is the total opposite.” she said<sup>189</sup>

Leading up to that first service in 1993, I was an associate in the ministry at Salvation Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York. The senior pastor was the (late) Rev. Dr. Lucius Walker Jr. I was able to exercise my gifts and skills in preaching, teaching, and other aspects of ministry. Pastor Walker was a great pastor and mentor, and faith rooted organizer. His activism gained him local, national, and international recognition.

The Rev. Dr. Lucius Walker, a Baptist minister who gained national attention with calls for reparations for the descendants of slaves and with repeated violations of the United States embargo of Cuba through caravans of humanitarian aid,

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<sup>189</sup> Joyce Shelby, “Spirit Moves Them to Worship,” *N.Y. Daily News*, March 3, 1996.

Mr. Walker's life was transformed on Aug. 2, 1988, as he led a delegation on a fact-finding trip to Nicaragua, where contra rebels were battling the government. Pastor Walker and others were wounded and two others were killed on that mission. He later founded the, Pastors for Peace organization. Pastors for Peace is an ecumenical agency whose mission is to help forward the struggles of oppressed peoples for justice and self-determination. The organization has now sent hundreds of tons of aid, including medical gear and roofing material, to Latin American countries. Of its 40 missions so far, 21 have been to Cuba.

In addition to organizing supply missions, Rev. Walker was founding director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization and negotiated an agreement with Cuban officials allowing dozens of American children from poor areas to study at Havana's Latin American School of Medicine. As part of that program, American graduates are expected to return to the United States, get medical licenses and provide care in underserved communities.<sup>190</sup>

Working with Pastor Lucius Walker was inspiring. It afforded me the opportunity to mesh my political and theological ideologies. When I joined the ministerial staff of Salvation Baptist Church in 1982, I was already involved in social activism work in New York City for at least 10 years, and was deeply entrenched in working on issues impacting the lives of disadvantaged families and children in New York.

Church of New Beginnings ("Spirit on the Move") is a small congregation, yet gigantic in passion, and has a history and spirit-filled mission of social justice ministry.<sup>191</sup> We have worked with many organizations, activists, and individuals to address injustice across New York City, including but not limited to: The National Black United Front, The Coalition For A Quality Education, The Freedom Party, Center For Women's Development At Medgar Evers College. Occupy Wall Street, The Brownsville Residents,

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<sup>190</sup> Douglas Martin, "Baptist Pastor For Peace Dies At 80," *New York Times*, Sept 11, 2010.

<sup>191</sup> Safiya Bandele, personal interview by author, Brooklyn New York, October 20th, 2011.

Activists, Concerned Citizens, Clergy and Friends (BRACC-CAF) Committee, and  
Legacy Organizing Committee to save True South Bookstore.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising, then, to learn the traditional greeting that passed between Masai warriors: "Kasserian Ingera," one would always say to another. It means, "And how are the children?"

It is still the traditional greeting among the Masai, acknowledging the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well being. Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional answer, "All the children are well." Meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that the priorities of protecting the young, the powerless, are in place. That Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being, its proper functions and responsibilities. "All the children are well" means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles for existence do not preclude proper caring for their young.

I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children's welfare if in our culture we took to greeting each other with this daily question: "And how are the children?" I wonder if we heard that question and passed it along to each other a dozen times a day, if it would begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of or cared about in our own country.

I wonder if every adult among us, parent and non-parent alike, felt an equal weight for the daily care and protection of all the children in our community, in our town, in our state, in our country. . . . I wonder if we could truly say without any hesitation, "The children are well, yes, all the children are well. "

What would it be like . . . if the minister began every worship service by answering the question, "And how are the children?" If every town leader had to answer the question at the beginning of every meeting: "And how are the children? Are they all well?" Wouldn't it be interesting to hear their answers? What would it be like? I wonder . . .<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Adapted by Pat Hoerltoerfer from an excerpt of a speech by Rev. Dr. Patrick T. O'Neill.

On October 21, 2011 in Brownsville Brooklyn, Zurana Horton, a 34 years old mother of 12 children was fatally shot when she threw herself into the line of a hail of bullets.<sup>193</sup> She was trying to protect schoolchildren near Public School 298 in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn.<sup>194</sup> The incident happened as Mrs. Horton was attending to the welfare and safety of her own biological children. She was simply waiting for the arrival of their school bus. The bus arrived that day. Her children got off. However, she was not there to perform the duty of a mother. She had answered a higher call as she “hovered over some children like a bird”<sup>195</sup>, and paid the greatest honor to humanity. She sacrificed her life to save children.

Perhaps, this unfortunate tragic incident was a Kairos moment of sorts. Our children are in trouble. I believe that we must respond with a sense of urgency. Are we doing in life, what Zurana did through her death? Are we looking after the welfare of our children? Let us always remember that children have been (and still are) a part of social movements that has changed the course of human history.

The annals of history are instructive and give young people a place in God’s plan of redemption. During the 60’s in America young people played a significant role in the civil rights struggle.<sup>196</sup> “The children’s crusade” added a new dynamic to the struggle in

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<sup>193</sup> Burke, Kerry and Kappstatter, Bob and Morales and Mark, Parascandola, Rocco “Pregnant Mom dies shielding school children from rooftop gunman in Brooklyn”, *New York Daily News*, October 21, 2011, <http://www.nydailynews.com> (accessed 1/20/14).

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Lisa Miller, “34 Because Zurana Horton Took a Bullet to Save Her Daughter’s Life” *New York Magazine*, December 11, 2011, <http://nymag.com/nymag/rss/all/zurana-horton/> (accessed 1/20/14).

<sup>196</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Address Delivered at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.” May 3, 1963.

Birmingham and was a major factor in the success of the campaign.”<sup>197</sup> One writer stated that with heads erect, backs unbowed, fearless and unafraid, proud of their place of honor in the van of a whole people’s iron-willed and determined march toward a genuine freedom, the unfailing steps of the Negro youth have set a new pace for all those who struggle on the frontiers of social progress and a new and lofty standard of courage for its fighters to emulate.<sup>198</sup>

In June of 1976, hundreds of children walked out of school in South Africa in defiance of a school policy to make the dominant class’ language the primary instructional language.<sup>199</sup> This act of determination added fuel to the ongoing struggle against Apartheid and was not without young casualties.

Hector Pieterse, a 13-year-old student, was among the first student in the Soweto Uprisings to be shot dead by the police at the gate of Orlando West High School<sup>200</sup>. Many more children were among others who died, were shot, beaten, or went missing during the uprising.<sup>201</sup> This summoned the world to stand up and take notice.

Among the contemporary young activists who are capturing the attention of the world is Malala Yousafzai from Swat Valley in Pakistan. Currently she and her family have taken up refuge in Britain after Malala was shot in the head three times by

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> James Jackson. *US Negroes In Battle: From Little Rock To Watts* (Moscow: Progress, 1967) page 16.

<sup>199</sup> “Marian Shinn” When Alexandria went up in flames” 1987, in “*Soweto: The Fruit of Fear*” edited by Peter Magubane (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press) no pages numbers.

<sup>200</sup> Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprising* (South Africa: South African Democracy Education Trust: 2007) page 344.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p 350.



the Taliban on October 9, 2012.<sup>202</sup> She is known as the girl who refused to be silenced and stood up for the rights of girls to be educated.<sup>203</sup> “She miraculously survived and continues her campaign for the education of girls.”<sup>204</sup>

In the Brownsville Community there has been noteworthy contributions of young people in the struggle for freedom and justice. During World War II in the 40’s, it is reported that children in Brownsville demonstrated a great sense of social consciousness.

The children of Jewish families in Brownsville collected grease cans which were needed for glycerin in the manufacture of bombs. They collected used tires for the rubber. Brownsville kids helped with everything from blood drives to raising funds for the starving war overseas. Some were school or class-run activities. Others were done on individual initiative and collections were duly turned over to the authorities. War bond efforts were a nationwide effort and Brownsville raised a huge sum of money for a working class neighborhood -15 million dollars. Kids participated through Savings stamps books, which, when you filled one up to the lordly sum of \$18.75 could be converted into a single \$25.00 War bond.<sup>205</sup>

By the 1960’s the ethnic makeup of Brownsville had changed considerably. In 1910 two-thirds of Brownsville residents were-first generation immigrants, and 85 percent of these immigrants were from Russia<sup>206</sup>. By 1962, only 80,000 people lived in Brownsville, and more than 75 percent of these residents were Black or Puerto Rican.<sup>207</sup> 1970 ushered in a changed in demographics and neighborhood configuration in

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<sup>202</sup> Malala Yousafzai, *I Am Malala* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2013), 211-12.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., Jacket.

<sup>204</sup> Malala Yousafzai, *I Am Malala* (New York: Little, Brown & Company: 2013) 211-12.

<sup>205</sup> Sylvia Siegel Schildt, *Brownsville: The Jewish Years*, (Kentucky: Booksurge, 2007), 54-55.

<sup>206</sup> Weddell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews and the Changing Face of the Ghetto*, (Chicago & London, The University Of Chicago Press, 2002), 14-15.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.,149.

Brownsville; now only 4 percent of the population was White.<sup>208</sup> The allocation of Public Housing developments had increased and expanded the community.<sup>209</sup> Unfortunately, services - particularly housing, began to decline.

Some native young activists such as: Paul Chandler utilized their skills and passion in the struggle for tenants' rights. As a member of (CUSA) **Christian and Jews United For Social Action** young Paul Chandler and others organized and mobilized tenants against slumlords. The group also used other nonviolent protest tactics, including sit-ins at local government offices, to pressure officials to respond to tenants' complaints.<sup>210</sup>

The struggle for community control of education in Ocean Hill, Brownsville in the 60's is another time in history when children joined others to bring about change that impacted the quality of education across New York City. Students participated in the boycott on a high level. For example, on February 3, 1964, 464,000 students, 45 percent of the student body, and 90 percent of Brownsville's students joined the boycott<sup>211</sup>. More than a decade of community struggle scored a victory with respect to the decentralization of education. It resulted in the development of local community districts having control over policies, staffing and running local schools.

Furthermore, the horrific, senseless deaths of many young people have given righteously indignant human beings the moral resolve to fight for justice. The bombing of the Sixteenth Street Church in Birmingham Alabama where Denise McNair (11), Addie

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 223-224.

Mae Collins (14), Carole Robertson (14) and Cynthia Wesley (14) were killed will never be forgotten.

And four little children were blasted to death on a September Sunday when segregationist revenge-seekers lobbed a 15-stick of dynamite through the basement window of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Church in Birmingham where 80 Negro children were in Sunday School classes... In the basement, the horribly mangled bodies of the four little girls lay buried under the rubble. The head of Denise McNair, who had taken the full blast of the explosive, was severed from her body, the rest of her was cut up in little pieces in the shambles of rubble that once was a Sunday school class.<sup>212</sup>

Twenty-three other people were also hurt by the blast.<sup>213</sup> Two years later, in 1955, 14 years old Emmett Tills' Body was fished out of the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi.<sup>214</sup> On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks made a statement of resistance by refusing to get up and give her seat to a white passenger on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama.<sup>215</sup> I once heard that Rosa Parks stated that during her act of resistance she had the death of Emmitt Till on her mind.<sup>216</sup>

We all revisited an epic case of police violence and brutality as we view the movie Fruitvale Station early in 2013. The killing of young Oscar Grant in California on December 31, 2008 was an atrocity and mobilized the community and the nation in a

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<sup>212</sup> James Jackson. *US Negroes In Battle: From Little Rock To Watts* (Moscow: Progress, 1967), 41-42.

<sup>213</sup> Emmitt Till Historic Intrepid Center, Civil Rights Study Tour, caption, Glendora Mississippi, April 6, 2013.

<sup>214</sup> Paula Giddings, "*When And Where I Enter: The Impact Of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*" (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984), 257-265.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Dr. Howard Robinson, "*Veterans Of The Civil Rights Struggle*" (lecture, National Center For the Study Of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University, Montgomery, Alabama, April 2, 2013).

unanimous call for justice. It reverberated the questionable killings of so many other young people, including but not limited to, ten years old Clifford Glover, fourteen years old Claude Reese, fifteen years old Randolph Evans, and twenty three years old Michael Griffith. All of these were unarmed youths who were killed between the years of 1973-1986 in New York.

There are still young people in Brownsville who are investing in their community to make it a safe place for families to live and for children to thrive. Many of these children and families reject the label that Brownsville is “one of the most violent in the city where optimism feels out of reach,”<sup>217</sup>

This demonstration project aims to develop a strategic plan for a fund honoring Zurana Horton’s sacrifice. Through this fund, we pray that generations to come will be made aware of her act of valor and sacrifice. Prayerfully, it will provide positive outlets and nurture the aspirations of a percentage of children in Brownsville, whose lives have been impacted by street violence.

### CHAPTER THREE PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

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<sup>217</sup> Brownsville Community Justice Center. Brownsville Anti-Violence Project Fact Sheet, distributed at Brownsville Justice Center Advisory Council Meeting, at Howard Houses Community Center, Brooklyn, N.Y. June 2011.

## **Goals and Strategies**

**Goal 1:** Host 4 awareness raising community activities on quality of life conditions in Brownsville's past and present.

**Strategy 1:** Develop plan to publicize and mobilize for activities.

**Strategy 2:** Implement the plan.

**Strategy 3:** Host activities.

### **Evaluation of Goal 1:**

(a) No less than 50% of event's participants will complete a questionnaire.

(b) Completion of 3 out of four awareness raising events.

**Goal 2:** Build a team to develop a strategic plan for the children's fund.

**Strategy 1:** Recruit 7 to 10 people for team.

**Strategy 2:** Recruit youth for one quarter to one half of the team's composition.

**Strategy 3:** Conduct an orientation for team.

**Strategy 4:** Explore ways to share the fund's vision with the team.

**Evaluation of Goal 2:** Recruitment of no less than 7 individuals for team with no less than two of them being young adults.

**Goal 3:** To develop the fund's strategic plan with the team.

**Strategy 1:** Identify a name for the team.

**Strategy 2:** Appraise the status of the initiative to rename  
Watkins Avenue to Zurana Horton Way.

**Strategy 3:** Implement a plan of action for the next steps in the street renaming.

**Strategy 4:** Plan the annual event for the "Shero From Around The Way"

**Strategy 5:** Host the annual Zurana Horton, "Shero From Around The Way"  
Event

**Strategy 6:** Research developing a children's fund.

**Strategy 7:** Identify a name for the children's fund

**Strategy 8:** Complete required documentation for 501.C3 status.

**Strategy 9:** Host Community Celebration.

**Evaluation of Goal 3:** Seventy-percent of strategic plan completed.

## CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### **Historical/Economic**

*What is the historical basis for the current socio-economic status of the Brownsville Community?*

Brownsville, as many other communities, has gone through a number of transitions throughout the years. As stated earlier, it has changed from a neighborhood of predominantly Eastern European immigrants in the mid-1800s to a predominantly African-American and Hispanic American community in 2013.<sup>218</sup>

Along with the demographic change, also came a change in housing. “With 18 public housing developments in total, Brownsville has the most concentrated public housing of any neighborhood in the country.”<sup>219</sup> The history of Brownsville documents the protracted struggle of a community to empower and stabilize itself economically.

Zurana lived in one of the public housing development at the time of her death. At some point in history, her narrative became intertwined with the history of the public housing complex, and the community at large. When, how, and why did this happen?

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<sup>218</sup> Youth Justice Board, *Looking Forward: Youth Perspective On Reducing Crime In Brownsville And Beyond*, Center For Court Innovation. May 2011, [www.courtinnovations.org](http://www.courtinnovations.org) (accessed November 7, 2013).

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

## **Social**

*What resources are currently available in the community that support the targeted group (ages 6-17) whose lives have been impacted by street violence?*

Brownsville Community is not replete of resources. There are a number of initiatives, resources, and organizations that have been working to improve the quality of life for young people within the community. Our goal is to identify those community services. Overall, we want to determine whether there are any that are dedicated to servicing the population that we have identified.

## **Biblical/Theological**

*What is rooted in Scriptures about social justice advocacy on behalf of children in poor communities?*

Zurana Horton lived in Brownsville and died there. Some of her family and children still reside there. Some of the children that she gave her life for still live there. Income and economic sustainability is an issue of many of these families. According to the Center For Court Innovations, the median income for a family in Brownsville is \$26,802, with about one third living below the poverty line.<sup>220</sup>

What would Jesus do given the Brownsville situation? Would Jesus go to Brownsville, spend time in getting to know the community, and minister to the people's needs? Based upon its' reputation for street violence, would Jesus go out of his way to avoid "Zurana's Community?"

In Luke 7:11 Jesus showed up for a widow and restored life to her son.

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<sup>220</sup> Suvi Hunger, *Community Perceptions of Brownsville, A Survey of Neighborhood Quality of Life Safety and Services* (new York: Center For Court Innovations, 2011), 1. <http://www.courtinnovation.org> (accessed 12/13/14).



It is interesting to note that of the three popular resurrections by Jesus in the Bible, two of them are children.<sup>221</sup> One is the young unnamed man in Luke 7:11. Another is the little daughter of Jarius. The third is Lazarius of Bethany.<sup>222</sup>

The community, Nain, in Luke 7:11 is only mentioned in the gospel according to Luke. According to commentaries it was located on a steep hill and was a small poor village.<sup>223</sup> It was probably not a popular place and required much physical effort to travel uphill to get there.<sup>224</sup>

Jesus and his disciples traveled to this small poor village and ministered to the need of this mom by restoring her son's life. Jesus was the poor people's advocate, minister, spiritual healer, and Savior.

He did something that was considered ceremoniously impure to perform this miracle.<sup>225</sup> He touched the son's coffin. But the pinnacle of the moment was that an unnamed poor woman, in a poor community was given back her lifeline, her only son.

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<sup>221</sup> Pulpit Commentary, 7:11 Luke, Bibleencyclopedia.com (accessed 1/23/14).

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, 7:14 Luke, Bibleencyclopedia.com (accessed 1/23/14).

## CHAPTER FIVE EVALUATION PROCESS

The preponderance of our data for this project will be drawn from questionnaires, reflective journals, and interviews. The site team and I will undergo a thoughtful collaborative process so that the questionnaires are thoughtfully designed.

### **Method of Evaluation 1**

I will gather information to find out what the residents know and believe about their community and gauge their perspectives on Brownsville's reputation of being the most violent community in NYC. What are young people saying? What are elders saying? Are there differences of opinions according to age? In February, we will interview the Youth Justice Board of Committee For Court Innovations. Our preliminary research has revealed that they have been in the Brownsville Community conducting research for a few years. Evidently, their research have informed the process for the establishment of a community justice court which is currently being built.

We will host four awareness-raising activities with the first occurring in March and will last no later than September. Participants will be asked to fill out questionnaires that after each event.

Awareness raising will also be facilitated through focus groups. By March no later than April, we will have the focus groups identified. The focus groups will have the advantage of contextualizing and expanding their responses through group discussions. They will also respond to a pre and post questionnaire. Our site team and the Brownsville Residents, Activists, Concerned Citizens, Clergy and Friends (BRACC-CAF), will determine the amount of sessions for each focus group.

It is instructive to this demonstration project to identify those programs and/or organizations in the community that support young people. I am particularly interested in any initiative that supports children between ages 6-16 who have been impacted by street violence.

In order to obtain this information, my site team and I will utilize the questionnaire provided in the online packet, Community Resource Mapping: Know Your Youth Resources Landscape. Beginning in March we will begin to do community mappers by gathering information from individuals, tenant associations, community base organizations, religious organizations, planning board and others.

From the onset, my site team and I will gather data through interviews from oral histories. We will record relevant information in our journals. I will interview members of Zurana Horton's family to construct her narrative.

Periodically, the site team and I will meet for share-outs and updates. In the early part of August, I will work with the site team to organize, summarize and analyze the results of all questionnaires, interviews, and journal entries. During this process, we will compare and contrast data derived from human subjects and other sources. Careful attention will be given to the gathering of information on the economic situation in

Brownsville. As we interview and observe, we will orient ourselves to listen carefully for comments, perspectives, and ideas on, “ children in the Brownsville Community.”

## **Method of Evaluation 2**

The process of building the team to work on the children’s fund will occur primarily through recommendations and volunteers. As we host the activities and interact with participants in focus groups and the larger community, we will take note of energetic, interested participants. Recommendations from the BRACC-CAF committee will also be strongly considered. Once the team is solidified we start working on the strategic plan.

## **Method Of Evaluation 3**

After the team has been established, I will work with the team on implementing the strategies aligned with goal # 3. At the end of October, we will evaluate our progress utilizing the 7 Strategies of goal #3. Then, we will outline the next steps in setting up the fund.

## CHAPTER SIX MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Introduction to the setting provided a snapshot of the depth and breath of my background and experiences in community and faith rooted organizing. This demonstration project is in alignment with the tenor of my passion for working with the community.

My site team has submitted the appraisal of my competencies as follows:

### **Faith-Rooted Community Organizer**

When the organizers of New York's Occupy Wall Street decided - for the first time - to have a member of the clergy address the "occupiers", they reached out to Rev. Elizabeth Butler, having been made aware of her understanding of and commitment to social justice. This long-standing commitment includes organizing groups of people - church members (and non)- for social justice action that is most definitely faith-rooted. The media coverage of the event including a photo of Rev. Butler on the platform speaking to the large crowd; the rapt and attentive faces of the listeners served to witness the power of her political message presented in biblical context.

### **Theologian**

"Biblical Engagement" is the title of the Bible Study classes conducted by Rev. Butler. Held in a community-based-organization, the participants are truly *engaged* as they are led through specific scripture and receive instruction not only as to meaning and interpretation of the word, but, importantly, given an opportunity to reflect on the

relevance of the bible lesson to their own lived experiences. Rev. Butler's sermons are excellent vehicles: 1) in terms of how the Spirit moves among the congregation, and 2) as explanation of biblical doctrine in the context of people, places and traditions of a specific time.

### **Preacher**

Preaching is formal speech presentation with the goal of persuasion. To that end, Rev. Butler's effectiveness results from meticulously researched sermons delivered in a spirit-guided manner. Her style is conversational and spirited. Organized with a beginning/introduction, the text/scripture with its inherent challenges to the congregation builds to a crescendo of *Spirit in the House!* The challenges are accompanied by relevant, often contemporary examples as guidance for the life concerns facing the congregation. In other words, always a message of hope and Thanks to God for Grace.

### **Worship Leader**

As befitting its name - *Church of New Beginnings* - offers a worship experience that is both grounded in tradition and creative. Years of experience as an educator in the New York City Public School system has equipped Rev. Butler with knowledge of how to move participants through processes, i.e. liturgy and ceremony. Skilled in explication, she is able to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for the congregation. As expected, on specific occasions (e.g. Easter) her leadership in terms of the sermon and other remarks is in keeping with biblical and church tradition. However, in her broadened concept of worship leader, she has also created time and space for special occasions, such as acknowledging accomplishments of the church youth.

## **Prophetic Agent**

*Speaking Truth to Power* has been the rallying cry for many social justice movements as well as a challenge to those who would lead. The "prophet" thus speaks having analyzed individuals and institutions in position to help or hinder, to build or destroy. Rev. Butler brings a discernment to societal issues and speaks a truth with love and compassion, especially for victims of oppression. Her work around the slain mother Zurana Horton is a specific strategy for change. We have witnessed the effect of her healing ministry as she prayed with individuals on sidewalks, in hospital rooms, in auditoriums - wherever the Lord has directed her steps.

## **Leader**

At *Church of New Beginnings*, Rev. Butler's leadership has created an environment conducive to spiritual growth and development. As she freely shares her own spiritual journey, she inspires all to embrace our own "gifts of the Spirit". A leader pays attention to and gives careful thought to people's lives. Based on these insights and careful listening, Rev. Butler is able to not only delegate but to also motivate and encourage higher reaching. A leader also sees opportunities for ministry through current events; the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington was an event that Church of New Beginnings participated in as an organized group of church members and friends. In preparation for the event, Rev. Butler discussed King's philosophy, his ministry and the ongoing struggle for social and economic justice.

## **Religious Educator**

Rev. Butler's years of experience with the Board of Education has equipped her with Master Teacher tools. Utilizing these tools for religious education, she teaches religious and ethical concepts using sound pedagogy. Because she understands varied learning styles, she is able to develop appropriate educational strategies - a consequence of her love of learning coupled with her biblical knowledge. A teacher must organize her classroom -structure, course content, learning aids - in order to achieve desired outcomes. Rev. Butler teaches religious education in a parallel manner.

## **Counselor**

I (Safiya Bandele) have benefitted personally from Rev. Butler's healing work as a Counselor. First, during my hospitalization and, second, during the grieving period when my Mother made her transition. In both of those painful circumstances, Rev. Butler's ability to assist me in working through those difficult times was invaluable. A third personal reference is the counseling received by my daughter and her husband during their marriage crisis. At the first sign of "marital trouble", I had urged them to seek Rev. Butler's counsel and guidance, which helped them immensely. In a very courageous fashion, Rev. Butler has - from the pulpit - discussed her own difficulties and utilization of therapy. This sharing has been tremendously important - giving others encouragement to also seek "outside" help. Countless individuals have brought their life trials and tribulations to her because of her accessibility, her authenticity, and her reassurances that be God wants us to be healthy in mind, body and spirit.



## **Pastor**

In her role as *undershepherd* at the *Church of New Beginnings*, Rev. Butler considers each member of her flock as deserving of individualized attention and guidance on their life journey. Accordingly, she spends quality time with members, attentive to their spiritual and personal development. Whether leading by example from the pulpit, conducting church rituals, teaching Bible Study, facilitating Church business or discussing her own self-care, Rev. Butler is secure in her role as Pastor. As a result, members often publicly acknowledge her role as they deepen their relationship to God.

## **Spiritual Leader**

Rev. Butler is an acknowledged Spiritual Leader in her community as evidenced by the frequency of requests to officiate and/or deliver eulogies. Often, these are non-church going community residents who are drawn to Rev. Butler through witnessing or experiencing her spiritual presence and power. At a recent event, she was introduced as "The People's Pastor". Being cognizant of the varied belief systems and paths, Rev. Butler always speaks from her Christian faith while respectfully acknowledging other spiritual practices. Visitors to *Church of New Beginnings* may include practitioners of West African Yoruba, Islam, Catholicism and Hindu - all made to feel welcome by Rev. Butler as a Spiritual Leader who is grounded and open to new knowledge - all to the Glory of God - and she would add "according to your beliefs".

## **Ecumenist**

Rev. Butler participates in community interfaith, interdenominational entities formed to address quality-of-life issues. It is especially significant given the historical marginalization that she - a Black Clergywoman - is not only present *in the room*, but that

she knows *what to say* in the room! Additionally, as a well-travelled Leader, Rev. Butler infuses her ministry with global references.

### **Witness or Evangelist**

As a messenger of the Living Word, Rev. Butler uses her own lived experiences to proclaim with fervent passion the Lord's promise to the faithful. She bears witness in a powerfully profound manner both inside and outside the Church boundaries. When the Spirit of the Lord comes over Rev. Butler, the observer may also feel the energy; indeed, one might say the energy travels around the room. This excerpt from a poem about Rev. Butler speaks to that energy: "*She brings the good news of God's Grace/Available to all/She brings the Good News of the resilience of the human spirit/She travels with the Word/Leaving her message, her footprint and fragrance for all.*"<sup>226</sup>

### **Administrator**

*Church of New Beginnings* as an institution benefits from Rev. Butler's serving as Chief Administrator. Congregational involvement in activities and programs is ensured through task analysis and strategic planning. An excellent example is the annual observance of the church anniversary. The event's success is due to Rev. Butler's administrative leadership: full discussion of the goals, guidance toward objectives, delegation of responsibilities, the creation of an environment conducive to the exchange of ideas and the utilization of members' gifts. Rev. Butler is the personification of the leader as described by Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie: Women leaders tend to solicit input, teach, and create positive working environments. "*They tend to discard the hierarchy so the leader is at the center rather than at the top.*"

### **Professional**

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<sup>226</sup> Safiya Bandele, Poem to the Author, January 20, 2014. E-mail.

The ministry should be treated as a profession: *an occupation or vocation requiring training in the liberal arts... and/or advanced study in a specialized field.* Rev. Butler's professionalism is evident in the following indicators and competencies: 1) Too often ministers excel in *verbal* communication and prowess, giving short shrift to written communication. Rev. Butler, however, is as skilled in **written communication** as she is in verbal communication, and has a body of written materials as evidence. 2) In work production, i.e. **performance of tasks**, Rev. Butler has a track record of both church and community-related accomplishments. One example is her work with the Medgar Evers College Clergywomen project. 3) The professional understands team work or group dynamics and has the **ability to communicate** and motivate towards the desired outcomes.

### **Financial Management**

For this category, we lack direct specific knowledge; however, *Church of New Beginnings'* history and administration indicate financial competency and solvency.

### **Technology/Social Media Management**

Rev. Butler designed the striking logo for *Church of New Beginnings* and has subsequently and consistently produced "dazzling" layouts and materials for the Church. As leader, she has fully embraced social media and has a rich presence online.

## **Competencies Chosen for Development**

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:** Develop a more adept understanding and skills of fiscal matters in the implementation and sustenance of ministry.

Strategy 1: Attend a grant-writing workshop.

Strategy 2: Identify steps and processes for writing a grant.

Evaluation: Respond to a request for a small grant and submit paperwork.

**FAITH ROOTED ORGANIZER:** Develop a deeper understanding of the Spiritual and the Human Motivation for participating in social change and ability to inspire reflection and action.

Strategy 1: Schedule an interviews with a faith rooted and/or community organizers.

Strategy 2: Develop focus questions for the interview with site team.

Strategy 3: Interview and Shadow a Faith Rooted Organizer.

Evaluation: (a) Responses to a minimum of 75% of the questions.

(b) Identification of a deep insight or strategy that I will integrate into my faith rooted organizing.

(c) Share reflection of the experience with the site team and get their feedback.

**SPIRITUAL LEADER:** Sets an example in his or her own observance of spiritual disciplines, including the ability to observe, “ Sabbath Rest,” i.e., a regular time of retreat for spiritual refreshment and renewal.

Strategy 1: Plan 7 monthly spiritual life activities.

Strategy 2: Predict 3 outcomes for each activity.

Strategy 3: Participate in the activities.

Evaluation: Completion of 5 out of 7 personal spiritual life activities with  
2 of the 3 outcomes successfully accomplished for each one.

### Appendix A Timeline

Date	Proposal Topic/Area	Activity	Person Responsible	When Completed
		Submit Proposal	EB	
2/2014	Proposal Overview	Meet with Advisor	EB	
2/2014	Proposal Overview	Meet with Site Team	EB	
2/2014	Proposal Overview	Meet with BRACC-CAF	EB	
2/2014	Goal 1	Meet with Center For Court Innovations, CBO's, Religious organization, Planning Board, etc.	EB & another Site team member	
2/2014	Goal 1	Meet with BRACC-CAF to brainstorm setting up focus groups, and planning the 4 community awareness activities.	EB	
2/2014- (Monthly Ongoing)	Competency	Schedule spiritual life retreat activities	EB	
3/2014	Competency	Schedule Interview with Faith rooted leader/community organizer	EB	
3/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB	
3/2014	Goal 1	Develop Activities and Questionnaire For Focus Group	EB & Site Team	
3/2014	Goal 1	Set-up focus groups	EB & BRACC-CAF	
3/2014- 5/2014	Goal 1	Host weekly focus group session	EB & Site Team	
3/2014	Goal 2	Set up strategy for community	EB, Site Team, BRACC-CAF	

		mapping teamwork		
3/2014-6/2014	Goal 2-	Conduct mapping	Community Mapping Team	
3/2014	Goal 3	Host 1 <sup>st</sup> Community Awareness Activity.	EB, BRACC-CAF	
	Goal 3	Research documentation for 501.C3	EB, Site Team, BRACC-CAF	
4/2014	Proposal development	Meet With Advisor	EB	
4/2014	Goal 3-	Preliminary Meeting to set up Team.	EB, BRACC-CAF	
	Goal 4	Develop plan of action (POA) for resuming Street renaming initiative	EB BRACC-CAF	
4/2014	Goal 4	Implement (POA)	EB, BRACC-CAF	
4/2014	Competency	Research Grant Writing Training Opportunities	EB,	
4/2014	Proposal Development	Reading, Research Writing	EB	
	Competency	Attend Grant Writing Workshop	EB	
5/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB	
5/2014	Goal 1	Meeting- Street Renaming	EB BRACC-CAF	
5/2014	Competency	Identify source for small grant to support the POA	EB	
5/2014	Proposal Development	Reading, Writing, Research	EB	
6/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB	
6/2014	Goal 1	Conclude focus groups & summarize findings	EB Site Team BRACCCAF	
6/2014	Goal 2	Conclude community mapping and summarize findings	EB Site Team BRACC-CAF Community	

			Mapping Team	
6/2014	Proposal Development	Read, Research, Write	EB	
	Competency	Make plans to travel and Interview Faith Rooted leader/Community Organizer	EB	
6/2014	Competency	Host 2 <sup>nd</sup> Awareness Activity	EB	
6/2014	Goal 2&3	Continue Plans for Annual Zurana Horton Tribute	EB, Site Team BRACC-CAF	
7/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB	
7/2014 - 9/2014 (Ongoing)	Goal 2 & 3	Update-meet on Street renaming & Continue Plans for Annual Zurana Horton Tribute	EB, BRACC-CAF	
7/2014-10/2014	Proposal Development	Read, Write, Research	EB	
8/2014	Proposal Development	Meet with Advisor	EB	
8/2014	Goal1	Host 3 <sup>rd</sup> Awareness Raising activity		
8/2014	Goal 2	Solidify team	EB	
9/2014	Goal 3	Meet with team to: 1- Share vision. 2- Name the fund. 3- Continue work on 501.C3. 4- Plan for celebration. 5- Plans to continue the work of setting up		



		the fund.		
10/2014	Goal 2&3	Host Zurana Horton Annual Community Tribute Celebration	EB BRACC-CAF Site Team	
10/2014	Goal 2&3	Evaluate Tribute & Status of Overall Work, Plan meeting for next phase.	EB BRACC-CAF Site Team	
10/2014	Proposal Development	Complete DP Draft		
10/2014	Proposal Development	Review With Site Team	EB	
10/2014	Proposal Development	Review with advisor	EB	
11/2014	Proposal Development	Rewrite	EB	
12/2014	Proposal development	Submit To editor	EB	
1/2015	Proposal Development	Preliminary Submission	EB	

Abbreviations:

EB = Elizabeth Butler

BRACC-CAF = Brownsville Residents, Activists, Concerned Citizens, Clergy and Friends.

### Appendix B Budget

Date	Proposal Topic/Area	Activity	Go To person(s)	Materials Needed	Cost/funding
1/30/14		Submit Proposal	EB	2 bound copies	\$10.00
2/2014	Proposal Overview	Meet with Advisor	EB		
2/2014	Proposal Overview	Meet with Site Team	EB	Journals Chart Paper Copies Of Proposal	\$500.00

				Markers Projector Refreshments	
2/2014	Proposal Overview	Meet with BRACCCAF	EB	Refreshments	\$ 20.00 (in-Kind)
2/2014	Goal 1	Meet with Center For Court Innovations, CBO's, Religious organization, Planning Board, etc.	EB & another Site team member		
2/2014	Goal 1	Meet with BRACCCAF to brainstorm setting up focus groups, and planning the 4 community awareness activities.	EB	Chart Paper Markers Refreshments	\$35.00 (In-Kind)
2/2014- (Monthly Ongoing)	Competency	Schedule spiritual life retreat activities	EB		\$1,050
3/2014	Competency	Schedule Interview with Faith rooted leader/community organizer	EB		
3/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB	Books, Copies, Cartridges, etc.	\$1000.00
3/2014	Goal 1	Develop Activities and Questionnaire For Focus Group	EB & Site Team	Refreshments	\$35.00 (In – Kind)
3/2014	Goal 1	Set-up focus groups	EB & BRACC-CAF		
3/2014- 5/2014	Goal 1	Host weekly focus group session	EB & Site Team	Questionnaires Refreshments Pens Other materials	\$200.00
3/2014	Goal 2	Set up strategy for community mapping teamwork	EB, Site Team, BRACC-CAF		
3/2014- 6/2014	Goal 2-	Conduct mapping	Community Mapping Team	Pens Recording Sheets	\$25.00
3/2014	Goal 3	Host 1 <sup>st</sup> Community Awareness Activity.	EB, BRACC- CAF		\$200- \$500

	Goal 3	Research documentation for 501.C3	EB, Site Team, BRACC-CAF		
4/2014	Proposal development	Meet With Advisor	EB		
4/2014	Goal 3-	Preliminary Meeting to set up Team.	EB, BRACC-CAF	Refreshments	\$25.00 (In – Kind)
	Goal 4	Develop plan of action (POA) for resuming Street renaming initiative	EB BRACC-CAF	Refreshments	\$25.00 (In – Kind)
4/2014	Goal 4	Implement (POA)	EB, BRACC-CAF		
4/2014	Competency	Research Grant Writing Training Opportunities	EB,		
4/2014	Proposal Development	Reading, Research Writing	EB		
	Competency	Attend Grant Writing Workshop	EB		\$50 - \$300
5/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB		
5/2014	Goal 1	Meeting- Street Renaming	EB BRACC-CAF	Refreshments	\$25.00
5/2014	Competency	Identify source for small grant to support the POA	EB		
5/2014	Proposal Development	Reading, Writing, Research	EB		
6/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB		
6/2014	Goal 1	Conclude focus groups & summarize findings	EB Site Team BRACC-CAF		
6/2014	Goal 2	Conclude community mapping and summarize findings	EB Site Team BRACC-CAF Community Mapping Team		
6/2014	Proposal Development	Read, Research, Write	EB		
	Competency		EB		
6/2014	Competency	Host 2 <sup>nd</sup> Awareness	EB		\$200-500

		Activity			
6/2014	Goal 2&3	Continue Plans for Annual Zurana Horton Tribute	EB, Site Team BRACC-CAF		
7/2014	Proposal Development	Meet With Advisor	EB		
7/2014	Competency	Travel to Interview and Shadow Faith Rooted leader/Community Organizer	EB		\$ 700
7/2014 - 9/2014 (Ongoing)	Goal 2 & 3	Update-meet on Street renaming & Continue Plans for Annual Zurana Horton Tribute	EB, BRACC-CAF	Refreshments	\$25.00 (In-Kind)
7/2014-10/2014	Proposal Development	Read, Write, Research	EB		
8/2014	Proposal Development	Meet with Advisor	EB		
8/2014	Goal 1	Host 3 <sup>rd</sup> Awareness Raising activity			\$200- \$500
8/2014	Goal 2	Solidify team	EB		
9/2014	Goal 3	Meet with team to: 1- Share vision. 2- Name the fund. 3- Continue work on 501.C3. 4- Plan for celebration. 5- Plans to continue the work of setting up the fund.		Refreshments	\$25.00
10/2014	Goal 2&3	Host Zurana Horton Annual Community Tribute Celebration	EB BRACC-CAF Site Team	Miscellaneous Speakers Honorarium	\$600.00
10/2014	Goal 2&3	Evaluate Tribute & Status of Overall Work, Plan meeting	EB BRACC-CAF Site Team	Refreshments	\$25.00

		for next phase.			(In-Kind)
10/2014	Proposal Development	Complete DP Draft			
10/2014	Proposal Development	Review With Site Team	EB		
10/2014	Proposal Development	Review with advisor	EB		
11/2014	Proposal Development	Rewrite	EB		
12/2014	Proposal development	Submit To editor	EB		
1/2015	Proposal Development	Preliminary Submission	EB		

Total Expenditures = \$6,100.00

In-Kind                -\$ 215.00

Balance                \$5, 885.00

Contributions from Candidate, Church, others \$5, 885.00

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## NOTES





**APPENDIX B:**  
**Focus Group Session Notes**

Community Meeting: Brownsville 5/9/14

**Airing of Community Concerns and Issues:**

1. Gun Violence
  - a. no surveillance cameras in buildings
2. Lack of programs for interventions
3. Harassment  
*i.e. stop and frisk*
4. Not enough policing in development
5. Not enough proactive youth involvement programs;  
*after school programs, recreational activities*
6. Insufficient Daycare programs
7. Meaningful activities for youth engagement
8. Too much conflict among the youth in the developments
9. Insufficient and safe spaces and avenues for residents to voice their concerns
10. Poor or no political representation
11. Not enough economic resources

What is Good?

1. GED Program

2. Library
3. Some Caring People
4. Community Meeting – when there are meetings and people come out and get involved.

Nine people in attendance.

## APPENDIX C:

### Micah DMin Cohort Work Retreat Schedule

#### Doctor of Ministry Micah Cohort Work Session Atlanta Georgia 1/13-15/ 2014 (draft)

Monday 1/13/14	Tuesday 1/14/14	Wednesday 1/15/14
745- 8:50am ~ Breakfast	7:45- 8:50am~Breakfast	745- 8:50 am ~ Breakfast
8:50-9:00 ~morning inspiration~ Margo Coker	8:50-9:00 ~ morning inspiration~ Carolyn McKinstry	8:50-9:00 ~ morning inspiration ~ Martha Bouyer
<i>Proposal Updates</i> 9:00 -10:00 Martha Bouyer	<i>Proposal Updates</i> 9:00 -9:30 Elizabeth Butler	
10:00-11:00 Evelyn Miller-Suber	9:30-10:00 Carolyn McKinstry	9:00-10:00 ~Planning Session~ The NYTS March 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2014 Doctor of Ministry Reunion - “What will our participation look like, feel like, and sound like?”
11:00 -11:10 ~ Break	10:00-10:30 Margo Coker	
<i>Proposal Update</i> 11:10-12:10 Everett Kilgo	10:30-10:45~ Break	
12:10 –1:00 Lunch	<i>Proposal Updates</i> 10:45-11:15 Everett Kilgo	
1:00 –1:05 ~after noon inspiration~ Elizabeth Butler	11:15-11:45 Evelyn Miller -Suber	Closing Prayer and Departure
<i>Proposal Updates</i> 1:00-2:00 Margo Coker	11:45-12:15 Martha Bouyer	
2:00-3:00 Carolyn McKinstry	12:15 – 12:30 Wrap-up ~ after noon inspiration~ Everett Kilgo	
3:00- 3:10 Break		
<i>Proposal Update</i> 3:10-4:10 Elizabeth Butler	12:30-Until ~Lunch ~Visit to King Center ~Dinner	
4:10- 4:30 wrap-up ~ evening inspiration ~ Evelyn Miller-Suber		

## APPENDIX D:

### Questionnaire

#### **Questionnaire For Brownsville Residents – No Name Required.**

For each question, put a check ✓ next to answer which best applies to you.

1. What is your gender   Female \_\_\_\_\_      Male \_\_\_\_\_
  2. How old are you? age  
\_\_\_\_\_ Under 12 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ Between 13 and 17 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ Between 18 and 35 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ Between 36 and 45 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ Between 46 and 55 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ Between 56 and 65 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ Over 65 years old
  3. How long have you lived in Brownsville? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Are you a parent?   Yes \_\_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_\_
  5. If yes to # 4, how many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. If yes to number #5, do you have children between the ages of?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 0 – 5 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6 – 17 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ 18 - 25 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ 26 or older
  7. If yes to number 6, has any of your child (children) ever been \*affected by street violence in the community?   Yes \_\_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_\_
- \*affected means – a person who is injured or harmed physically, emotionally, or psychologically from shootings, in the street. It also includes those who suffered trauma from witnessing an act of street violence.
8. How much do you know about the Brownsville community - history?  
community affairs, economic affairs, culture, geography, people?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Nothing  
\_\_\_\_\_ A little  
\_\_\_\_\_ A fair amount

\_\_\_\_\_ A lot

9. Would you like to know more about Brownsville? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

10. What is good about living in the Brownsville community?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Flip over to the other side)

11. Look at the list below. Use the number 1-12 to rate the issues.

Number 1 goes next to the area you believe needs the most attention in Brownsville. Priority Issues

\_\_\_\_\_ Economic development

\_\_\_\_\_ Surveillance cameras in buildings

\_\_\_\_\_ Intervention programs for young people

\_\_\_\_\_ Meetings and/or safe spaces for residents to voice their concerns

\_\_\_\_\_ Policing within the housing development

\_\_\_\_\_ Youth involvement programs: *afterschool, recreational activities, jobs, cultural awareness*

\_\_\_\_\_ Daycare Services.

\_\_\_\_\_ Conflict among youths in the developments

\_\_\_\_\_ Police harassment and/or *stop and frisk*

\_\_\_\_\_ Poor and/or no political representation

\_\_\_\_\_ Gun Violence

Other

Issue(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Look at the list below. What are the most effective ways of addressing some of the issues listed in #10 above? Number them from 1-6.  
Number 1 goes next to the method you like best.

\_\_\_\_\_ Petitions  
\_\_\_\_\_ Study Groups  
\_\_\_\_\_ Community Meetings  
\_\_\_\_\_ Speakers  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grant writing to get money for programs  
\_\_\_\_\_ Rallies and Marches

13. Any other

comments? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E:  
Meet and Greet Leaflet



**Rev. Elizabeth Butler**  
**Hosts a Meet and Greet at**  
**Howard Houses**  
with  
**District 20 - State Senate Candidate**  
**Jesse Hamilton**



**Friday, August 15, 4-6PM**  
**Brownsville Library (Next to Howard Houses)**  
**61 Glenmore Avenue, on Watkins St., Brooklyn, NY 11212**  
**\*Complimentary appetizers and beverages\***

**Any Questions please call David 347-768-9022 or Ashley 631-495-7721**

APPENDIX F:  
Tears Leaflet

## Children Of The TEARS: Togetherness Encourages Awareness & Righteous Service

According to statistics, nearly 50% of children in Brownsville below the poverty live level. When surveyed, nearly 70% of the community residents indicated that school age children in the community have nothing to do when school is not in session (*Center For Court Innovation, 2011*). Survey results, questionnaires, and community meetings, concur (72% and above) that Brownsville's residents perceive gun violence as one of the biggest problems in their community. Additionally, in small focus groups, more than 80% of children in Brownsville indicated that they feel unsafe in their community and have few outlets

**CHILDREN OF THE TEARS:**

**Togetherness  
Encourages  
Awareness &  
Righteous Service**

- ***Founded and Incorporated in 2014***
- ***Currently in the process of establishing 501c3 status.***

The organization's primary purpose is to provide the children of Brownsville (ages 6-17) and their families:

- Emotional Support
- Positive Outlets
- Social Engagement

who have suffered trauma from street violence. The pilot project is limited to the Howard Housing Development (NYCHA).

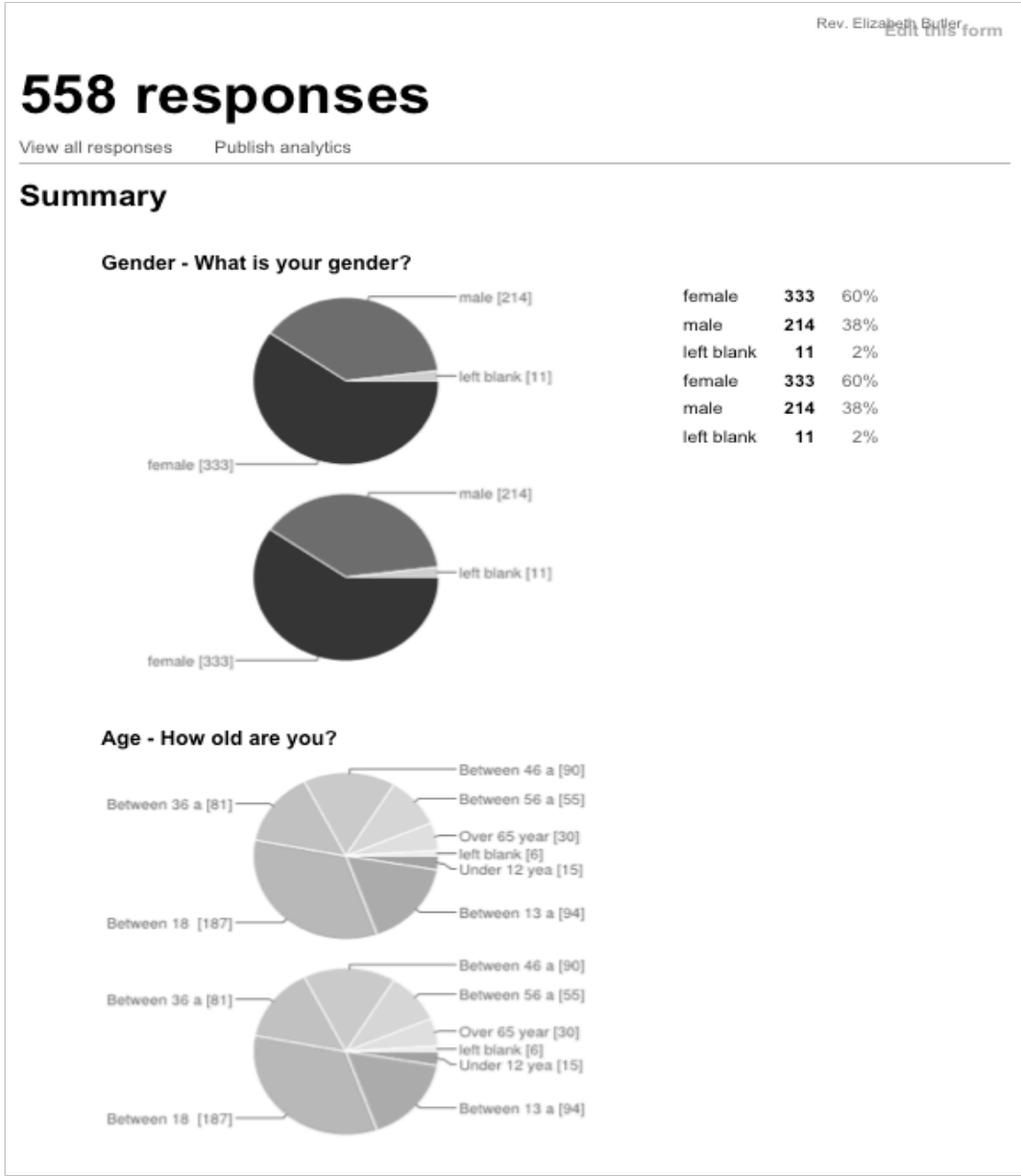
We are calling on Community Residents, Leaders, Elected Officials, Clergy, Educators, Activists, Merchants and Concerned Citizens for assistance and support. This project was inspired by the act of valor that claimed the life of Zurana Horton. It also pays homage to all of the other lost lives whose blood is permanently imbedded in Brownsville's soil.

Contact person: Rev. Elizabeth Butler, New York Theological Seminary - Doctor of Ministry Program; Church of New Beginnings; Children Of The TEARS: Togetherness Encourages Awareness & Righteous Service, Brownsville Voices; (917) 617-4203, (718) 452-1141 ... churchofnewbeginnings52@yahoo.com.



APPENDIX G:

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS



Under 12 years old	<b>15</b>	3%
Between 13 and 17 years old	<b>94</b>	17%
Between 18 and 35 years old	<b>187</b>	34%
Between 36 and 45 years old	<b>81</b>	15%
Between 46 and 55 years old	<b>90</b>	16%
Between 56 and 65 years old	<b>55</b>	10%
Over 65 years old	<b>30</b>	5%
left blank	<b>6</b>	1%
Under 12 years old	<b>15</b>	3%
Between 13 and 17 years old	<b>94</b>	17%
Between 18 and 35 years old	<b>187</b>	34%
Between 36 and 45 years old	<b>81</b>	15%
Between 46 and 55 years old	<b>90</b>	16%
Between 56 and 65 years old	<b>55</b>	10%
Over 65 years old	<b>30</b>	5%
left blank	<b>6</b>	1%

#### History of Residency - How long have you lived in Brownsville?

5 1/2 years  
 5 1/2 years  
 25 years  
 50+ years  
 over ten years  
 56 years  
 45 years  
 22 years  
 48 years  
 8 months  
 3 months  
 Over 45 years  
 18 years  
 Forever  
 14 months  
 32 years  
 Since 5th grade  
 work in Brownsville  
 2008 - 8y

all my life  
7 yrs  
34 years  
29  
20+years  
over 20 years  
52 years  
left blank  
6  
1985  
1989  
8  
47 years  
64 years  
24 years  
11 years old  
17  
61 years  
19 years  
19 years  
14  
Since 12  
20  
21 years old  
42 years  
Not long  
1999  
4 months  
60 years  
worked in brownsville for last 2 years  
1 year  
9 months  
Since I was three years old  
8 years  
35 years  
30+ years  
14 years

yes  
2 years  
10  
not long  
46 years  
40+ years  
3 years  
1 1/2 years  
70 years  
11 years  
23 years  
55 years  
26 years  
80 years  
36 years  
My whole life  
10+ years  
2 months  
All my life  
All my life  
Many years  
27 years  
18 years  
More than  
44 years  
33 years  
All my life -16 years  
72 years  
21 years  
20 years  
9 months  
No answer  
All my life.  
Over 25 years  
40 years  
1986 - 18ye  
10 years

38 years  
About 30-35 years  
43 years  
left Blank  
6 months  
1997 - 12ye  
Yes  
1952  
17 months  
12 years  
10 months  
5 years  
38 years  
few years  
Over 10 years  
whole life  
16 years  
50 years  
5 months  
5 months  
7 years  
13 years  
30 years  
15 years  
I do not live in Brownsville.  
most of my life  
28 years  
since 1984  
never  
6 years  
29 years  
9 years  
4 years  
53 years  
17 years  
5 1/2 years  
25 years

50+ years  
over ten years  
56 years  
45 years  
22 years  
48 years  
8 months  
3 months  
Over 45 years  
18 years  
Forever  
14 months  
32 years  
Since 5th grade  
work in Brownsville  
2008 - 8y  
all my life  
7 yrs  
34 years  
29  
20+years  
over 20 years  
52 years  
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47 years  
64 years  
24 years  
11 years old  
17  
61 years  
19 years  
14

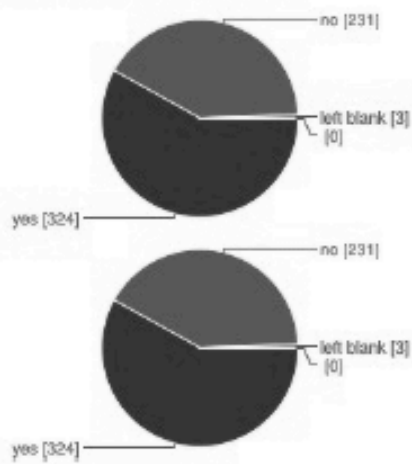
Since 12  
20  
21 years old  
42 years  
Not long  
1999  
4 months  
60 years  
worked in brownsville for last 2 years  
1 year  
9 months  
Since I was three years old  
8 years  
35 years  
30+ years  
14 years  
yes  
2 years  
10  
not long  
48 years  
40+ years  
3 years  
1 1/2 years  
70 years  
11 years  
23 years  
55 years  
26 years  
80 years  
36 years  
My whole life  
10+ years  
2 months  
All my life  
Many years

27 years  
18 years  
More than  
44 years  
33 years  
All my life -16 years  
72 years  
21 years  
20 years  
9 months  
No answer  
All my life.  
Over 25 years  
40 years  
1988 - 18ye  
10 years  
38 years  
About 30-35 years  
43 years  
left Blank  
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1997 - 12ye  
Yes  
1952  
17 months  
12 years  
10 months  
5 years  
38 years  
few years  
Over 10 years  
whole life  
16 years  
50 years  
5 months  
7 years



13 years  
 30 years  
 15 years  
 I do not live in Brownsville.  
 most of my life  
 28 years  
 since 1984  
 never  
 6 years  
 29 years  
 9 years  
 4 years  
 53 years  
 17 years

**Parent Status - Are you a parent?**



yes	324	58%
no	231	41%
left blank	3	1%
yes	324	58%
no	231	41%
left blank	3	1%
	0	0%

**Number of Children - How many children do you have?**

N/A  
 1 (king)  
 3  
 2  
 1

left blank  
0  
7  
6  
5  
4  
9  
8  
17  
18  
11  
12  
02  
10  
none  
No answer  
more than you  
N/A  
1 (king)  
3  
2  
1  
left blank  
0  
7  
6  
5  
4  
9  
8  
17  
18  
11

none  
No answer  
more than you

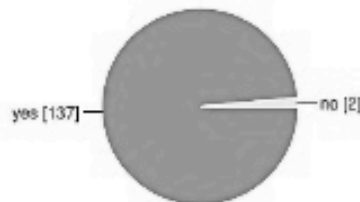
**Do you have children between 0-5 years old?**



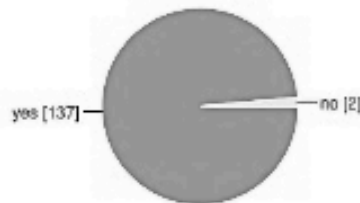
yes	76	14%
no	2	0%
yes	76	14%
no	2	0%

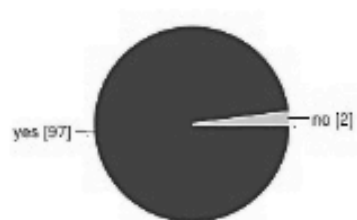


**Do you have children between 6-17 years old?**



yes	137	25%
no	2	0%
yes	137	25%
no	2	0%





yes	97	17%
no	2	0%
yes	97	17%
no	2	0%



**Do you have children age 26 or older?**



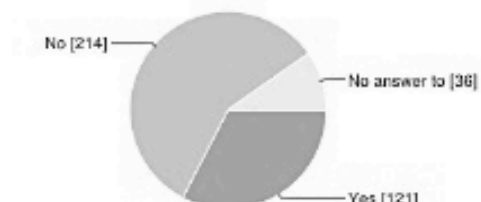
yes	106	19%
no	7	1%
yes	106	19%
no	7	1%



6-17 also

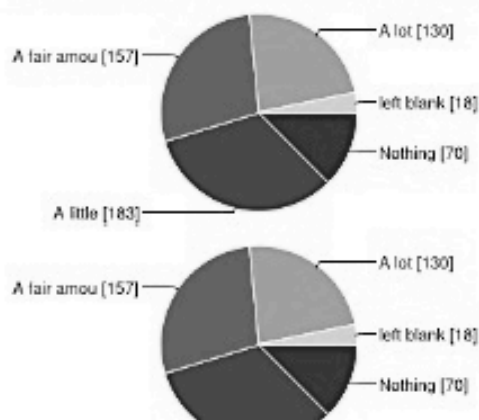
6-17 also

**Children and Trauma - Have your child(ren) been affected by street violence?**



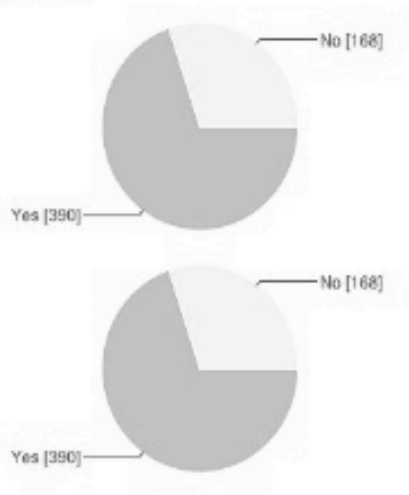
Yes	121	22%
No	214	38%
No answer to question	36	6%
Yes	121	22%
No	214	38%
No answer to question	36	6%

#### Community History - How much do you know about Brownsville?



Nothing	70	13%
A little	183	33%
A fair amount	157	28%
A lot	130	23%
left blank	18	3%
Nothing	70	13%
A little	183	33%
A fair amount	157	28%
A lot	130	23%
left blank	18	3%

### Brownsville?



Yes	390	70%
No	168	30%
Yes	390	70%
No	168	30%

### Perspective of Brownsville - What is good about living in the Brownsville community?

Nothing Really  
 Well I find it quiet at times  
 The location and the people  
 It has parks and stores to go to.  
 You are exposed to different cultures.  
 Community support of parades & programs.  
 Born and raise be here forever  
 The neighborhood residents.  
 P.S. 284  
 Howard Day  
 Playing basketball  
 Close to their stations  
 Nothing  
 you have friends  
 N/A  
 Nothing needs more improvement and less violence

I don't live here, but I know that Brownsville residents really take care of one another.  
 The library  
 I'm still here  
 The community is okay, it needs more improvement.  
 My friends and family are peaceful & loving. Everyone treats me with love and respect  
 Nothing really  
 Good  
 How we unite  
 It's live it's nice  
 13  
 everyone is a family, we stick together.  
 You build strength.  
 The strong community ties.  
 Just like it  
 Nothing good  
 The Spirit.  
 Faithful committed loving community  
 It is very diverse.  
 close to stores  
 The park  
 nothing  
 The rent  
 Fun without the shooting  
 Family days are nice  
 The centers give the kids something to do.  
 Rent  
 Basketball tournaments  
 Everything  
 Not too much  
 The summer school activities  
 Corner stores and the closeness of the people  
 The good people.  
 everything to me

Good people  
 The potential  
 close proximity to various businesses  
 Instructors have fun and active activities for youth  
 You live around your people  
 Sometimes people can get along and have a good time. Also watch the young children playing basketball.  
 Restaurants  
 Stores are close  
 Community activities, events and affair  
 affordable rent  
 Lots of stores, grocery store, clothes store, pharmacy, etc...  
 sense of community  
 When people don't shoot  
 social activities  
 Most people work hard around here  
 It's ok  
 Store everywhere  
 The basketball tournaments  
 They a active with the community, also living in the project as well  
 There good people left!  
 Brownsville day  
 A lot of places to shop  
 The variety, the shopping  
 Feel comfy  
 The people that really care  
 Friends  
 It's fun without the shooting and when the cops harass us.  
 it's bad  
 The Community Centers  
 Gain info on urban living  
 A lot of things to do in the community of Brownsville.  
 The rent is reasonable



Its a small community and unity of good people.  
The shopping  
To me its very easy to commute because almost all the trains I usually take are nearby.  
Basketball Tournaments, pool  
Everybody is really close  
Not far to do shopping  
community unity  
Pools, nursery, parks, shopping community  
not much  
The community center is good.  
Me being apart of the youth community. I feel that there is a sense of unity amongst the  
Brownsville Community.  
People  
parks, pool  
Fire station, E.M.S, restaurants, church  
Family oriented, low income housing, free program for all children  
Life  
Being around my people but we need to stop this senseless violence.  
Easy access to anywhere  
Nothing right now  
Libraries  
I find that I can relate to the people in Brownsville.  
parks  
I have a lot of friends.  
Love family  
Fun without a lot of shooting  
The people are o.k. the shopping area is not to real  
Not a thing  
let blank  
fair  
left blank'  
Everybody knows each other  
left blank

Me and my family are pretty well known and liked  
 No Answer  
 Housing  
 Some good people  
 Friendship among some  
 Knowing my neighbors and the people in it.  
 It's nice and quiet but at night it's loud and reckless  
 Everything is around you stores, library, pools, trains, buses community centers  
 None  
 family lives close by  
 I can find that I can relate to the people in Brownsville.  
 bigger places  
 the unity  
 around my people  
 People of different  
 You know a lot of your neighbors.  
 If one has a problem, we all have a problem.  
 I has community centers for kids.  
 Community with dreams and a dying vision.  
 I am near train & bus  
 Females  
 It is historical  
 No Comment  
 The people  
 Nothing really everything gotten worse throughout the years  
 If you want to know anyone business just ask someone from Brownsville  
 Relating to the people in the community.  
 family  
 nothing much  
 School  
 Honestly, I don't think anything is good about living in Brownsville Community due to the gang  
 activity that goes on around here.  
 The shopping area but it be better and transportation  
 parks, events for children  
 some people are nice and friendly.  
 Business

a lot  
 The cost of living and some of the people  
 I get to give back  
 A cocommunity that can get together but dont  
 Functional Library and Activite Community Center  
 No answer  
 NOTHING  
 Blessed land people (anointed environment  
 Having a place to live and love; working and playing with the children.  
 Low rent  
 Convenience to trantransportation, it has some good people  
 Thats where my store is located.  
 I have friends in the neighborhood and it's easy for me to know people.  
 I don't know  
 Not a damn thing at all  
 I have a roof over my head and I like it  
 Brownsville is a good community  
 Pools Close to train stations  
 some school. the center  
 Nothing except the change in community center.  
 Happiness  
 Some people can be friendly, but not all the time  
 Diversity  
 The place has gotten cleaner.  
 Not much  
 The pool  
 little meetings to have Brownsville a safe place.  
 pool  
 Not a damn thing  
 Everyone knows everyone.  
 I get to hang with my brothers  
 Community affairs  
 Good heat.  
 I don't like Brownsville  
 Low income housing  
 No, want to get out

It isn't the worst place  
 No good at all  
 We are all similar in some way in the community.  
 Nothing, Too many people are being killed.  
 Nothing Really  
 Well I find it quiet at times  
 The location and the people  
 It has parks and stores to go to.  
 You are exposed to different cultures.  
 Community support of parades & programs.  
 Born and raise be here forever  
 The neighborhood residents.  
 P.S. 284  
 Howard Day  
 Playing basketball  
 Close to their stations  
 Nothing  
 you have friends  
 N/A  
 Nothing needs more Improvement and less violence  
 There are people who want to make a difference.  
 Rent cheap  
 Teaching my people what they need to know to move up in life.  
 Most people work hard around here.  
 I don't live here, but I know that Brownsville residents really take care of one another.  
 The library  
 I'm still here  
 The community is okay, it needs more improvement.  
 My friends and family are peaceful & loving. Everyone treats me with love and respect  
 Nothing really  
 Good  
 How we unite  
 It's live it's nice  
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 everyone is a family, we stick together.  
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The strong community ties.  
 Just like it  
 Nothing good  
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 The centers give the kids something to do.  
 Rent  
 Basketball tournaments  
 Everything  
 Not too much  
 The summer school activities  
 Corner stores and the closeness of the people  
 The good people.  
 everything to me  
 We need a change!  
 No comment need improvement  
 Being with my people and helping them  
 Good people  
 The potential  
 close proximity to various businesses  
 Instructors have fun and active activities for youth  
 You live around your people  
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 When people don't shoot  
 social activities  
 Most people work hard around here  
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 They are active with the community, also living in the project as well  
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 The people that really care  
 Friends  
 It's fun without the shooting and when the cops harass us.  
 It's bad  
 The Community Centers  
 Gain info on urban living  
 A lot of things to do in the community of Brownsville.  
 The rent is reasonable  
 Affordable housing  
 Friendly people  
 I'm not sure I stay in the house because of the violence  
 It's a small community and unity of good people.  
 The shopping  
 To me it's very easy to commute because almost all the trains I usually take are nearby.  
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 Fire station, E.M.S, restaurants, church  
 Family oriented, low income housing, free program for all children  
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 Easy access to anywhere  
 Nothing right now  
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 I have a lot of friends.  
 Love family  
 Fun without a lot of shooting  
 The people are o.k. the shopping area is not to real  
 Not a thing  
 left blank  
 fair  
 left blank  
 Everybody knows each other  
 left blank  
 My family friends.  
 This always been my home.  
 The closeness to the shopping stores.  
 Me and my family are pretty well known and liked  
 No Answer  
 Housing  
 Some good people  
 Friendship among some  
 Knowing my neighbors and the people in it.  
 It's nice and quiet but at night it's loud and reckless  
 Everything is around you stores, library, pools, trains, buses community centers  
 None  
 family lives close by  
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 some people are nice and friendly.  
 Business  
 a lot  
 The cost of living and some of the people  
 I get to give back  
 A cocommunity that can get together but dont  
 Functional Library and Activite Community Center  
 No answer  
 NOTHING  
 Blessed land people (anointed environment  
 Having a place to live and love; working and playing with the children.  
 Low rent  
 Convenience to transportation, it has some good people  
 Thats where my store is located.



I have friends in the neighborhood and it's easy for me to know people.

I don't know

Not a damn thing at all

I have a roof over my head and I like it

Brownsville is a good community

Pools Close to train stations

some school, the center

Nothing except the change in community center.

Happiness

Some people can be friendly, but not all the time

Diversity

The place has gotten cleaner.

Not much

The pool

little meetings to have Brownsville a safe place.

pool

Not a damn thing

Everyone knows everyone.

I get to hang with my brothers

Community affairs

Good heat.

I don't like Brownsville

Low income housing

No, want to get out

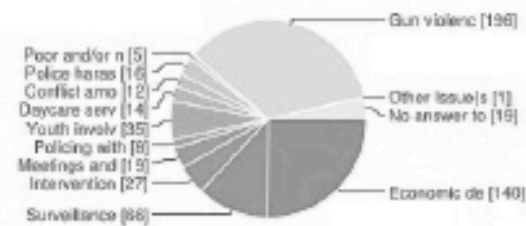
It isn't the worst place

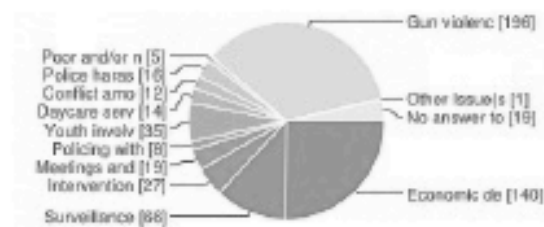
No good at all

We are all similar in some way in the community.

Nothing, Too many people are being killed.

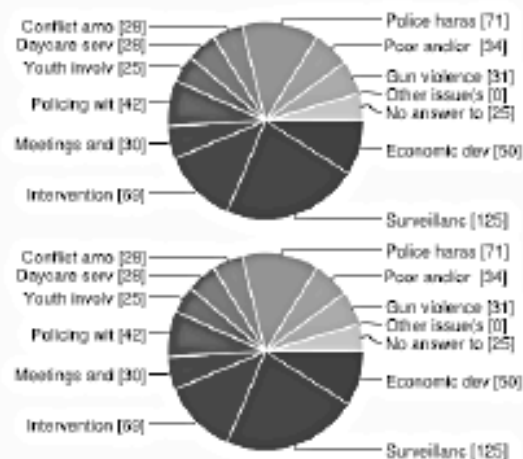
#### Ranking the issues - How important are these issues to you?





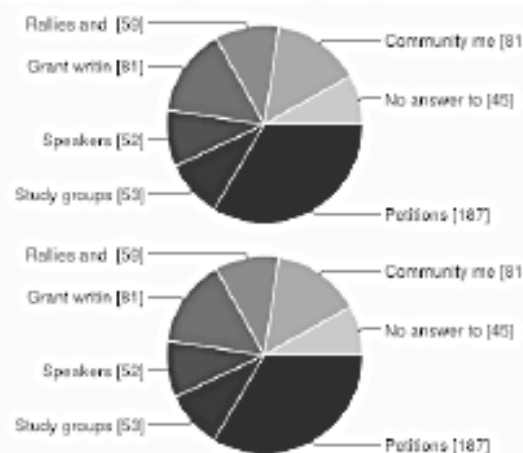
Economic development	140	25%
Surveillance cameras in buildings	66	12%
Intervention programs for young people	27	5%
Meetings and/or safe spaces for residents to voice their concerns	19	3%
Policing within the housing development	8	1%
Youth involvement programs afterschool, recreational, activities, jobs, cultural awareness	35	6%
Daycare services	14	3%
Conflict among youths in the development	12	2%
Police harassment and/or no political representation	16	3%
Poor and/or no political representation	5	1%
Gun violence	196	35%
Other Issue(s)	1	0%
No answer to this question	19	3%
Economic development	140	25%
Surveillance cameras in buildings	66	12%
Intervention programs for young people	27	5%
Meetings and/or safe spaces for residents to voice their concerns	19	3%
Policing within the housing development	8	1%
Youth involvement programs afterschool, recreational, activities, jobs, cultural awareness	35	6%
Daycare services	14	3%
Conflict among youths in the development	12	2%
Police harassment and/or no political representation	16	3%
Poor and/or no political representation	5	1%
Gun violence	196	35%
Other Issue(s)	1	0%
No answer to this question	19	3%

#### Ranking Issues- Second Priority



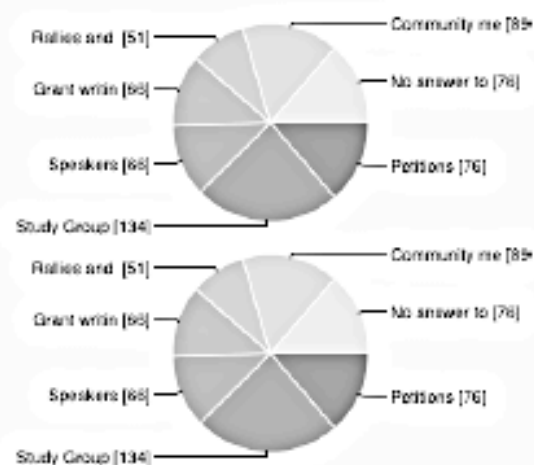
Economic development	50	9%
Surveillance cameras in buildings	125	22%
Intervention programs for young people	69	12%
Meetings and/or safe spaces for residents to voice their concerns	30	5%
Policing within the housing development	42	8%
Youth Involvement programs: afterschool, recreational activities, jobs, cultural awareness	25	4%
Daycare services	28	5%
Conflict among youths in the developments	28	5%
Police harassment and/or stop and frisk	71	13%
Poor and/or no political representation	34	6%
Gun violence	31	6%
Other issue(s)	0	0%
No answer to this question.	25	4%
Economic development	50	9%
Surveillance cameras in buildings	125	22%
Intervention programs for young people	69	12%
Meetings and/or safe spaces for residents to voice their concerns	30	5%
Policing within the housing development	42	8%
Youth Involvement programs: afterschool, recreational activities, jobs, cultural awareness	25	4%
Daycare services	28	5%
Conflict among youths in the developments	28	5%
Police harassment and/or stop and frisk	71	13%
Poor and/or no political representation	34	6%
Gun violence	31	6%
Other issue(s)	0	0%
No answer to this question.	25	4%

### How To Address The Issues - How should the issues be addressed?



Petitions	187	34%
Study groups	53	9%
Speakers	52	9%
Grant writing to get money for programs	81	15%
Rallies and marches	59	11%
Community meetings	81	15%
No answer to Question	45	8%
Petitions	187	34%
Study groups	53	9%
Speakers	52	9%
Grant writing to get money for programs	81	15%
Rallies and marches	59	11%
Community meetings	81	15%
No answer to Question	45	8%

### How To Address The Issues - Second Priority Issue



Petitions	76	14%
Study Groups	134	24%
Speakers	66	12%
Grant writing to get money for programs	66	12%
Rallies and marches	51	9%
Community meetings	89	16%
No answer to question	76	14%
Petitions	76	14%
Study Groups	134	24%
Speakers	66	12%
Grant writing to get money for programs	66	12%
Rallies and marches	51	9%
Community meetings	89	16%
No answer to question	76	14%

#### Other Comments - Do you have any other comments to share?

I'm so tired of nothing happening.

no

WHAT I CAN'T DO ALONE WE CAN DO TOGETHER. WITHOUT (GOD) NOTHING CAN AND WILL NOT BE DONE...

Gangs in the neighborhood

I want Brownsville to be a cleaner and happier environment to live in

More jobs & community

No

Police harassment of youth, "specially" Blacks. Drugs and gangs are a problem.  
 Gangs in the neighborhood.  
 This appreciate need a program that help adult with their reading & understanding  
 I think they need more activities for the children.  
 Housing do better The church need to get together  
 Got shot last year July 12, 2013. I'm 18. In the leg  
 Brownsville is a good place. It just the people and law that sometimes make it bad for the community.  
 Need more police surveillance cameras in Brownsville  
 Nothing  
 Youth employment needed  
 Gangs are a problem.  
 Everything needs to change  
 More rallies and marches needed more often to make a point.  
 N/A  
 Any and everything that can help our place be a better place to live. Reginald Thomas apt 180 Powell St  
 If these issues are meant the community would be a better place  
 No!  
 left blank  
 I am tired of the police picking on us for no reason. It needs to stop.  
 Need more cameras on corner by the shopping stores  
 Get this done Need to stop violence Love one come they  
 Workforce - Economy  
 Hell No !!!  
 need more special activities for workshops for parenting training.  
 NA  
 Lots, Lots, Lots of police harassment and stop and frisk. We need jobs for the youth  
 women to act like queens  
 Tired of seeing kids outside @ all times of the night.  
 Special attention for people affected by gun violence  
 More senior center open. Education for them reading, math and other  
 Young have to go to work children should watch in their neighbor Mrs Marie 347 742-4829  
 I got shot last year, July 12, 2013. I am 18. I was shot in the leg.  
 harassment by the police needs to stop. Make outlets for youth.  
 NO  
 We need to have unity

Spanish language - I understand some of the questions.

Taxes

I keep my children at home, so I guess the answer to #7 is "yes".

Lack of work opportunities

Drugs, violence, guns, cops need to stop giving guns to people in the streets and drugs.

None

Dirty housing hallways - garbage- people have drug issues.

Police need to identify them self in the comm.

Keep the pal center open for all children who need it.

Safety for children

Stop all the violence and talk about it.

We need more daycare centers, there are lots of gangs and lots of police harassment.

I want to see my generation get better

Tell the police to leave me alone

I love Howard Houses. The beef is not cool.

need a place where single mothers can go for help and the youth.

What is your goal/purpose of doing this?

If you would like help or an intern (unpaid), I'd love to volunteer.

Gangs are a problem

People always want to turn something

Social development

Police maced my daughter

Stop gun violence

Dirty areas is also an issue, Bullying (kids jumping other kids).

No

NONE

I would love to help. I am a community advocate. Please feel free to contact me 347 554-9634.

Foul language, littering, smoking at young age are also issues. The police should stop harassing very Black- suspicious person they see.

We need parenting resources skills/training (mom & dad) g-parents

that people need to get along

Reach the youths

More youth activities

Gang Violence / Social Media Attend your local pct council meetings- 73rd pct

Stop harassing our community. Black people and Spanish community, get the guns out of the street

Politicians are lairs & thieves Healthcare  
 stop killing kids  
 Education is needed.  
 Understand each others & guns, & drug, respect Thank you!  
 More events for senior  
 None!  
 Rent  
 Get the guns of the streets.  
 More Protect(ion)  
 The awareness has to be risen.  
 Unable to answer 11-14 because I haven't been here long enough :)  
 Bills  
 I am so tired of this wild, wild, west lifestyle.  
 Help our community become the best it could be ASAP!!!  
 Too much shooting it must stop. We are people too. We need help. We need understanding.  
 We need a chance.  
 Young people need to be leaders and not followers,  
 Tired welkin projects getting locked up  
 The crime rate needs to go down - more active patrolling.  
 Thank you for researching the Brownsville community  
 The bills and rent is to high  
 I believe if the youth has a job they won't go out there to do bad things  
 none  
 Nope  
 Community Leader Support!!!  
 The Shootings  
 Rent and Bills  
 We need to stick together. And start talking to parents of these children who's making and  
 starting violence. Go to their homes.  
 Thank You for helping us.  
 We need our people to support us.  
 My child is being bullied in school and also gun violence.  
 I hope our youth can get the services they need to stop the violence.  
 Communication I  
 Stop the gun violence !!!!  
 would love to see a tremendous decrease in the children's death rate.  
 GMO Foods. MSG in the foods. Stop giving our children toxic vaccines



They need to give the people a little more respect especially from the police. They are constantly harassing the people of the community.

Violence period - Please make changes.

Drugs are a problem.

I'm sick and tired of the bullshit.

Swimming, jazz for seniors, storytelling Senior Intervention, intergeneration health program, rent building, food coop - EBT ASAP

The gangs have taken over the streets, get guns off the street, stop harassing our youth, get gangs off the street, the seniors need more help shopping and coming out for air.

playground areas should be reconstructed.

Parents need to get together & be more involved in the community & see it for what it is. Lack of knowledge & concern.

Stop all of these killings. My youth wants to live.

I am tired of young kids getting killed.

Keep kids safe , let them live and see a future.

Brownsville is a beautiful Community. We just have to be on one accord with each other and ourselves.

I like the survey.

NYCHA fixing problems in a timely fashion for tenants.

We need to change our way of thinking before we change the community.

More centers

It made no sense for that white officer to choke hold that black man than later died. As I see that was him having a prejudice problem and that he was a little bigger than he was

What is your organization about?

I think to keep violence out of neighborhoods it start by being better parents

Rats

Littering in the buildings is a problem

Safe environment for our youth to grow as positive individuals in society

Killing and fighting are issues; We need games like basketball, football, kickball, and baseball.

Unity is the cure for poverty.

More role models needed, Gun shooting has to stop!

Need to have communication. Keep up the good work :)

More interaction from the political figures.

yes- people sleep - n - hallways & benches

We need social- emotional support.

labeling our young Black men

Low Income housing

Better Environment

Parent class free lunch and more free dinner. Gun violence need to stop. Police need to stop touch

Crackheads I'm happy, wheee

We need more community activities.

Fighting is an issue.

Don't close the PAL the kids needs afterschool activities

Gun shootings is a problem

Put prayer back in the schools

I am tired to see drug addicts in front of children. We need someone to rep-BrownsBrownsville. Boyland is out office close were to go?

We need a political representation Brownsville.

Better Quality Education In the Public Schools. Continue to work together for the Better Choices to help us have a successful future!

More help from churches is needed.

Need to stop violence, social development, low income housing, senior intervention, intergeneration health program, rent building, food coop - EBT ASAP

I'm so tired of nothing happening.

no

WHAT I CAN'T DO ALONE WE CAN DO TOGETHER. WITHOUT (GOD) NOTHING CAN AND WILL NOT BE DONE...

Gangs in the neighborhood

I want Brownsville to be a cleaner and happier environment to live in

More jobs & community

No

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Gangs in the neighborhood.

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I think they need more activities for the children.

Housing do better The church need to get together

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Brownsville is a good place. It just the people and law that sometimes make it bad for the community.

Need more police surveillance cameras in Brownsville

Nothing

Youth employment needed

Gangs are a problem.

Everything needs to change  
 More rallies and marches needed more often to make a point.  
 N/A  
 Any and eveverything that can help our place be a better place to live. Reginald Thomas apt  
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 If these issues are meant the community would be a better place  
 No!  
 left blank  
 I am tired of the police picking on us for no reason. It needs to stop.  
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 Lots, Lots, Lots of police harassment and stop and frisk. We need jobs for the youth  
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 Spanish language - I understand some of the questions.  
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 No  
 NONE  
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 stop killing kids  
 Education is needed.  
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Bills

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Too much shooting it must stop. We are people too. We need help. We need understanding.

We need a chance.

Young people need to be leaders and not followers,

Tired welkin projects getting locked up

The crime rate needs to go down - more active patrolling.

Thank you for researching the Brownsville community

The bills and rent is too high

I believe if the youth has a job they won't go out there to do bad things

none

Nope

Community Leader Support!!!

The Shootings

Rent and Bills

We need to stick together. And start talking to parents of these children who's making and starting violence. Go to their homes.

Thank You for helping us.

We need our people to support us.

My child is being bullied in school and also gun violence.

I hope our youth can get the services they need to stop the violence.

Communication I

Stop the gun violence !!!!

would love to see a tremendous decrease in the children's death rate.

GMO Foods. MSG in the foods. Stop giving our children toxic vaccines

They need to give the people a little more respect especially from the police. They are constantly harassing the people of the community.

Violence period - Please make changes.

Drugs are a problem.

I'm sick and tired of the bullshit.

Swimming, jazz for seniors, storytelling Senior Intervention, intergeneration health program, rent building, food coop - EBT ASAP

The gangs have taken over the streets, get guns off the street, stop harassing our youth, get gangs off the street, the seniors need more help shopping and coming out for air.

playground areas should be reconstructed.

Parents need to get together & be more involved in the community & see it for what it is. Lack

of knowledge & concern.  
 Stop all of these killings. My youth wants to live.  
 I am tired of young kids getting killed.  
 Keep kids safe , let them live and see a future.  
 Brownsville is a beautiful Community. We just have to be on one accord with each other and ourselves.  
 I like the survey.  
 NYCHA fixing problems in a timely fashion for tenants.  
 We need to change our way of thinking before we change the community.  
 More centers  
 It made no sense for that white officer to choke hold that black man than later died. As I see that was him having a prejudice problem and that he was a little bigger than he was  
 What is your organization about/  
 I think to keep violence out of neighborhoods it start by being better parents  
 Rats  
 Littering in the buildings is a problem  
 Safe environment for our youth to grow as positive individuals in society  
 Killing and fighting are issues; We need games like basketball, football, kickball, and baseball.  
 Unity is the cure for poverty.  
 More role models needed, Gun shooting has to stop!  
 Need to have communication. Keep up the good work :)  
 More interaction from the political figures.  
 yes- people sleep - n - hallways & benches  
 We need social- emotional support.  
 labeling our young Black men  
 Low Income housing  
 Better Environment  
 Parent class free lunch and more free dinner. Gun violence need to stop. Police need to stop touch  
 Crackheads I'm happy, wheee  
 We need more community activities.  
 Fighting is an issue.  
 Don't close the PAL the kids needs afterschool activities  
 Gun shootings is a problem  
 Put prayer back in the schools  
 I am tired to see drug addicts in front of children. We need someone to rep-  
 BrownsBrownsville. Boyland is out office close were to go?

We need a political representation Brownsville.

Better Quality Education in the Public Schools. Continue to work together for the Better Choices to help us have a successful future!

More help from churches is needed.

Need to stop violence, social development, low income housing, senior intervention, intergeneration health program, rent building, food coop - EBT ASAP

**Gender - What is your gender?**

**Age - How old are you?**

**History of Residency - How long have you lived in Brownsville?**

**Parent Status - Are you a parent?**

**Number of Children - How many children do you have?**

**Do you have children between 0-5 years old?**

**Do you have children between 6-17 years old?**

**Do you have children between 18-25 years old?**

**Do you have children age 26 or older?**

**Children and Trauma - Have your child(ren) been affected by street violence?**

**Community History - How much do you know about Brownsville?**

**Desire to learn about Brownsville - Would you like to learn more about Brownsville?**

**Perspective of Brownsville - What is good about living in the Brownsville community?**

**Ranking the issues - How important are these issues to you?**

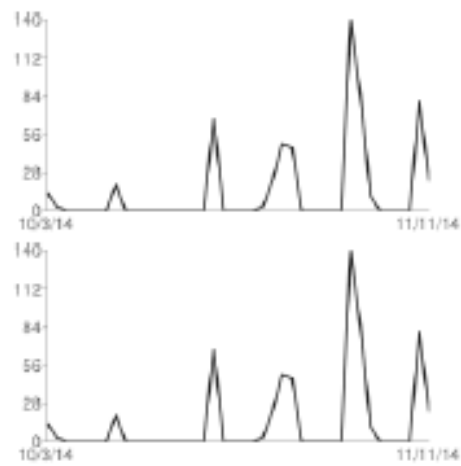
**Ranking Issues- Second Priority**

**How To Address The Issues - How should the issues be addressed?**

**How To Address The Issues - Second Priority Issue**

**Other Comments - Do you have any other comments to share?**

### Number of daily responses



### Number of daily responses

[View all responses](#) [Publish analytics](#)

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## Summary



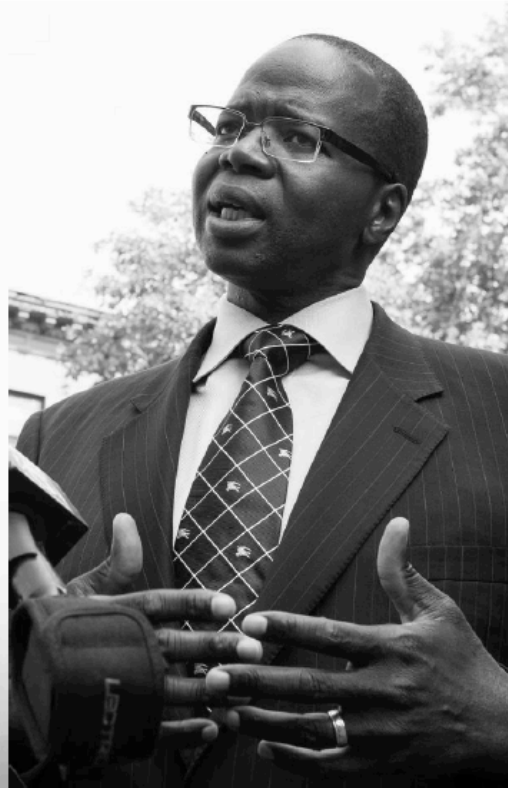
## **APPENDIX G:**

### **Awareness Raising PowerPoint**

#### **Town Hall Meeting**

**District Attorney Ken  
Thompson  
Wednesday, 6/18/14  
“Brownsville Matters”**

**Raising Awareness In  
Brownsville  
IS/PS 323**



D.A. ken Thompson  
brought his entire Executive  
Team to Brownsville. He  
stated that their role is to  
keep everyone safe.

He also went on to say that since the beginning of the year, there has been 34 shootings and 6 homicides in Brownsville. “This was 40 too many.”

He stated that  
we must prevent  
this gun  
violence instead  
of reacting to it.

Therefore he has put together a new unit called the crime strategy unit.

### Awards were given:

- Latisha Frazier, DA's Staff
- Mrs. Harris, Principal of 323
- Mr. Cooper
- Ms. Deidre Oliveria
- Christopher Duro Sinmi, *Ocean Hill  
Brownsville Committee Of Young  
Professionals*
- Lamont Carolina, *Ocean Hill  
Brownsville Committee Of Young  
Professionals*



DA Ken Thompson  
announced that a  
new youth program  
will be coming to  
Van Dyke soon.



Someone from the Family Justice Center gave remarks and asked how many people have visited the Family Justice Center since it was opened in 2005.

She mentioned that 160,000 clients have visited. There is an open invitation for Brownsville's residents to visit . On the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Family Justice Center (FJC) are nonprofit organizations.

Deidara Oliveria  
moderated the  
question and  
answer section.

Questions: Is there consensus between the police commissioner and the District Attorney regarding prosecution of small amounts of marijuana cases?

Answer: Implementation of new policy in Brooklyn- “do these cases up front” – They will determine whether these cases should reach the DA’s office.



Question: Will you  
bring more guns and  
gang awareness to  
East New York?

Answer: Yes

Question: How do you plan to stop gun violence?

1. Multifaceted Approach

2. They are tracing the guns to the states in which the sales originated. Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia i.e. Guns sales were traced to a family in Georgia. The family was arrested and brought to New York to face charges.

3. He is more interested in making the right decisions instead of quick decisions on this matter.

Additional audience questions were on the following topics:

- ◆ Is DA recognizing, young people and others in Brownsville making a difference?
- ◆ Nonprofit organizations – the community is not really feeling the impact of their services.

- ◆ Parenting issues should be addressed- guns are coming out of the household.
- ◆ What happened to scared straight programs in schools?
- ◆ Will sex trafficking programs, enforcement, and awareness be continued?
- ◆ Project redirect for ages 14- 22- what is the status?







## APPENDIX I:

### Awareness Raising Outreach Leaflet

# **ACTION NOW FOR NYCHA RESIDENTS**

**WHEN**  
**TUESDAY, JUNE 10**  
**11:30AM**

**WHERE**  
**SUTTER AVE (BTW ROCKAWAY**  
**AND MOTHER GASTON)**  
**SUBWAY: ROCKAWAY (3)**

**FEATURING**  
**BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT ERIC ADAMS**  
**COUNCILMEMBER DARLENE MEALY**  
**DISTRICT LEADER JESSE HAMILTON**  
**DISTRICT LEADER GABRIEL MCQUEEN**  
**COMMUNITY ADVOCATE INEISHAWILLIFORD**  
**COMMUNITY LEADERS**  
**NYCHA RESIDENTS**

## **RALLY/PRESS CONFERENCE**

Community leaders  
and NYCHA residents  
will take action to  
address the current  
conditions at NYCHA  
Houses.

## **TAKE ACTION**

We will take action to  
increase services  
and improve public  
safety for NYCHA  
residents.

## **WE DEMAND**

- Security  
Cameras
- Functional  
Elevators
- Senior and  
Community  
Center  
Funding

APPENDIX J:

## **“Nurturing Living Memories”**

**Please Join Us For  
A Community Memorial Event  
For Brownsville’s families - In memory of their slain loved ones.**



**For More Information:  
Rev. Elizabeth Butler  
(917) 917-617-4203, (718) 452-1141**

**On the 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Anniversary  
of Zurana  
Horton’s  
Death**

**Date:  
Saturday, October 25, 2014**

**Time:  
12- 2pm**

**Location:  
Community Center  
Brownsville Howard Houses  
90 Watkins Street  
(near Pitkin Avenue)  
Brooklyn, New York**

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